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THE

WORKS

Of the Moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN SHARP*,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of *YORK*.

VOL. VII. CONTAINING,

SERMONS againſt POPERY,

PREACHED

In the Reign of KING JAMES II.

And other PAPERS wrote in the

POPISH CONTROVERSY.

The THIRD EDITION.

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TO THE READER.

[Prefix'd to the First Edition of Vol. VII.]

IN the Preface *to the two Volumes of Archbiſhop* Sharp's *Works, which were lately printed, mention is made of* a ſmall Reſerve of Diſcourſes in the Popiſh Controverſy which might poſſibly, ſome time or other, be publiſhed with other of his Papers relating to that Controverſy.

When that Preface was wrote, the Editor had not determined with himſelf, whether this Collection ſhould ever come abroad or no. Much leſs had he any Apprehenſions that he ſhould, in ſo ſhort a Time, commit it to the Preſs. For he looked upon that Diſpute as out of Vogue, and little attended to; and alſo

alſo conſidered, that the Writings of the Proteſtant Divines in the Reigns of King Charles, *and* King James II. *were very numerous as well as excellent: and therefore that theſe Diſcourſes (tho' properly enough a Part of* the Popiſh Controverſy) *would ſeem ſuperfluous and unſeaſonable. And under theſe Reaſons he was diſpoſed to acquieſce, had not the late Attempts of the* Roman Catholics *in and about* London, *given Occaſion to revive the neglected Diſpute, and to put Men upon a Review of the Subjects in Debate between the* Church of England, *and the* Church of Rome. *This he thought a ſeaſonable Juncture for bringing to light the following* Treatiſes, *which have been ſuppreſſed above fifty Years, and perhaps might always have continued ſo, if ſome ſuch Reaſon as this had not accidentally offered itſelf to uſher them into the World.*

They are all, or moſt of them, deſignedly calculated for the Uſe of the unlearned Proteſtant. The Author of them had the Care

of

of one of the largeſt Pariſhes in London, *during the whole Time the late* Popiſh Controverſy *was on Foot. He was perfectly well acquainted with the Subtilties of the* Popiſh Divines, *and knew by abundant Experience among his own Pariſhioners, what were the principal Difficulties that the inferior Sort laboured under, from the fallacious and inſidious Perſuaſions and Inſinuations of thoſe who ſtrove to pervert them. What he wrote therefore, and is now publiſhed, was purpoſely contrived as a preſent Antidote to the Miſchiefs attempted among his Flock. For which Reaſon he entered as little as poſſible upon the learned or hiſtorical Part of the Controverſy (as will be obſerved, though he was very capable of diſcharging that Part of it with Succeſs) but confined himſelf chiefly to thoſe Points which were more immediately neceſſary to guard the Weak from the Sophiſtry of the* Jeſuits, *and to relieve and deliver the Unwary, who were already entangled in their Snares.*

With

With this View he hath formed his Arguments ſo plain, and made his Chain of Reaſoning upon them ſo natural and ſo familiar, that they appear to be adapted to the Taſte *as well as the* Capacities *of* ordinary Chriſtians. *Something there is likewiſe to the* Taſte *of the Party he oppoſes; ſuch of them at leaſt as have any Taſte of Beauty and Excellence in writing upon controverted Points;* viz. *The Calmneſs and Temper wherewith he engages them, and the ſpecial Care he always takes, never to calumniate or miſrepreſent them. He was wont to ſay himſelf,* That in his Sermons againſt the Papiſts he had always dealt honeſtly and fairly with them, charging them with nothing but what their Church openly avowed in her Creed, and Councils, and public Offices. *Which Candour of Temper and Equity of Conduct, in any Controverſy, tho' it be not always the readieſt Means of working upon the Vulgar, yet cannot fail of having a great Influence upon all ſerious and well-meaning People.*

He

He was often preſſed by his Friends to print theſe Diſcourſes himſelf. But he declined it. When he was ſolicited to do ſo about the Time of the Revolution, or ſoon after it, he gave for an Anſwer, that the Danger was then over, and the Deſign of them was ſuperceded; and that to publiſh them at that Time would only look like making his Court.

And it doth not appear that at any Time afterwards he regarded them, or meddled with them, further than to correct and tranſcribe one or two of them which he preached at York, *in order to check ſome Attempts that the popiſh Prieſts were ſuſpected and reported to have made in that Neighbourhood. One of theſe was that remarkable Sermon which upon the firſt Delivery of it in his Pariſh Church at* London, *in* 1686, *had drawn upon him the Diſpleaſure of* King James *and his Court, and had given Occaſion to the Order that was ſent to* Dr. Compton, *then Biſhop* of London,

to ſuſpend him, which brought on the Troubles *of that* Prelate *from the* eccleſiaſtical Commiſſion. *But whereas in his Tranſcript of this Diſcourſe, upon the Reviſal of it, that* Paſſage *which was ſuppoſed to be moſt* offenſive *and* obnoxious, *was entirely left out, (as being a particular Anſwer to a certain Argument that had been ſlip'd into his Hand in* St. Giles's Church, *as he ſuppoſed, by way of* Challenge, *and which therefore could not pertinently be repeated when he preached the ſame Sermon, above twenty Years after, at his own Cathedral) therefore recourſe was had for that* Paſſage *to the firſt or original Copy. And whereas the other Differences between the two Copies did not appear to be material, but to conſiſt rather in Correction of Expreſſions and Style, than of the Matter or Arguments, it was judged moſt adviſable to follow the firſt Copy altogether in this Edition;* † *both for the Satisfaction of the*

† Serm. VI. *A Diſcuſſion of the Queſtion which the Roman Catholics moſt inſiſt upon with the Proteſtants,* viz. *In which of the different Communions in Chriſtendom the only true Church of Chriſt is to be found? With a Refutation of a certain Popiſh Argument handed about in M.S. Anno* 1686.

the Reader, whose Curiosity would be better gratified with a true and faithful Representation of the very same Sermon that produced the Effects abovementioned; and also to vindicate the Author of it, from the unjust Reflections of Father Orleans *upon it, who knowing nothing of the Contents of it, charged it arbitrarily and upon hear-say; and likewise (for that was another Consideration worth regarding) to make it of a Piece with all the rest, which are now published from the first Hand, and without Emendation of any kind, since the Time they were preached in* St. Giles's *Pulpit. With this only Exception, that what were two Sermons upon* 2 Pet. iii. 16. *appear now only as one. And whereas the Sermon upon* Auricular Confession *was connected with others upon the same Text, which were lately printed in the fifth Volume under the Title of* Confession of Sins necessary to Repentance, P. 145. *it became unavoidable both* there *and* here *to omit as much as served only to shew the Connexion between them,*

and

and which therefore could have no Place in their preſent State of Separation.

Theſe were Liberties which Dr. Barker *owns he made no Scruple of taking with the* Poſthumous Sermons of Arch-Biſhop Tillotſon, *whoſe Authority he alſo pleads for doing ſo. The Editor hopes he may be indulged in the ſame Liberty, having never uſed it but when he judged it neceſſary, and even then without altering the Senſe, and with as little Change to the Words as poſſible.*

And now the Reader has all before him that is requiſite for his Information concerning theſe Sermons. If he ſhall not find them ſo finiſhed and correct as thoſe already printed, he will know where to aſcribe the Defect. An Imputation of Raſhneſs in the Publiſher of them, grounded on this Reaſon only, will not much affect him, provided his ſole Aim in the Publication be anſwered, which is the preſerving ſome People, into whoſe Hands they may fall, from the

the Errors of Popery, *and eſtabliſhing them more firmly in the* Communion of the Church of England. *Once they contributed very much to this good End. And it is not unreaſonable to expect they may do ſo again. And as it is certain that* Dr. Sharp *owed to them much of his Reputation in the* laſt Age, *ſo it is preſumed they may be received with ſome degree of Approbation in the preſent: at leaſt it is hoped, that what tended ſo eminently to advance his Credit* then, *will not turn to the Diſadvantage of his Memory now. The cloſing the Collection of his Works with his earlieſt Performances, is not unprecedented, neither can it ſeem improper to conclude his* Remains *with thoſe Pieces which firſt ſerved to raiſe his Character in the World.*

As concerning the Papers ſubjoined in the Appendix, their Relation to the Subject of the Sermons to which they are annexed muſt ſpeak their Propriety. The firſt is a Reply to a Letter from a Gentlewoman who had lately fallen into the Hands of

Dr.

Dr. Croſs (a Jeſuit, *Author of* the Contemplations of the Virgin, *and of ſome other popiſh Books.*) Mrs. Kingeſmill's *Letter is printed from the Original, and the Anſwer from a Copy of it, of* Dr. Sharp's *own writing; as all the other Papers that follow, are likewiſe found under his own Hand. They may have their Uſe; at leaſt as there are but few of them, the Publication of them* at this Time *will deſerve no Cenſure.*

CON-

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SERMON I.

Faith and reaſon reconciled: Or, nothing to be believed in religion but what it may be proved from principles of reaſon, that it ought to be believed.

1 PET. iii. part of the 15th Verſe.

——*Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.*

THE hope that is here ſaid to be in chriſtians, and of which they are to be ready to give an account, is without doubt nothing elſe but that faith, or that doctrine, or that religion which the chriſtians do profeſs, and upon which their hope of another life is grounded. In this figurative ſenſe is the word uſed in other places of ſcripture, particularly in the 26th of *Acts*, ver. vi. where the hope for which St. *Paul* is accuſed of the Jews, is plainly the chriſtian doctrine, and particularly

that part of it which concerned the reſurrection of the dead.

This then is the plain meaning of the precept in my text; that all chriſtians ſhould ſo far inquire into the grounds of that religion which they profeſs, and upon which they bottom their hopes, as to be ready and prepared at any time (when they are called upon to do it) to give a reaſonable account of it; ſuch an account as may ſatisfy any unprejudiced mind that they act like rational men in believing, and profeſſing as they do. *Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you*; that is, be prepared and inſtructed at all times to give a ſatisfactory account of your faith and religion to all ſuch as ſhall at any time call in queſtion the reaſonableneſs of it.

This being the ſenſe of the text, two points *very neceſſary in theſe times* *, we may obſerve from it;

Firſt of all, that faith and reaſon are not inconſiſtent one with another, but may well ſtand together. Whatever we are obliged to believe in matters of religion, we are by this precept obliged to be able to give a reaſon for; or to give an account of the reaſonableneſs of that belief. And therefore certainly we are not obliged to believe any thing that is unreaſonable, or that we cannot give a reaſon for our believing it.

The ſecond point to be obſerved from hence is, that it is not enough that our faith, or hope, or religion be reaſonable in itſelf, but it is the duty of every profeſſor of that faith ſo to ſatisfy himſelf of the reaſonableneſs of it, as to be able *to anſwer them that aſk a reaſon for it*. And therefore every man not only may but ought to enquire into his religion, and not ſo to rely

* Preached in 1687.

rely on the authority and judgment of other men, as to ſwallow, without examination, every thing that they propoſe to him.

Theſe two points are plainly contained in the text, and accordingly I ſhall make them the heads of my diſcourſe upon it.

I. The firſt point is this; that reaſon and faith are not inconſiſtent. Or this; the religion we profeſs is no unreaſonable thing. On the contrary in all the parts of it, it is ſuch as recommends itſelf to the reaſon of mankind; in all the parts of it, it is ſuch as we may be able to give a reaſon for.

The not attending to this point hath done much miſchief to religion; for it hath been the occaſion that many abſurd doctrines have been introduced into it, which perchance if this propoſition had been conſidered, would never have found entertainment in the world. They have done no kindneſs at all to our religion, but rather a great deal of diſſervice to it, who have made faith and reaſon two things oppoſite one to the other; maintaining this abſurd poſition, that our reaſon was ſo much of a different nature from our faith, that it ought never to be conſulted, much leſs to be heard when faith was concerned: Nay, any thing that was propoſed to us as a matter of faith, was ſo much the more to be believed, becauſe it was contrary to our reaſon. And if we can once attain to that pitch of virtue, as ſtrongly to believe things impoſſible in human reaſon, our faith was therein much the more glorious, and ſhould be much better rewarded.

This notion may indeed do great ſervice to the cauſe of the church of *Rome*, but how it will ſerve any purpoſes of the goſpel of Chriſt no conſidering man will be able to ſee.

My deſign at this time is to confute and expoſe this abſurd poſition, and to ſhew the neceſſary dependance that faith hath upon reaſon: but withal, the great improvement that reaſon receives from faith. To ſhew that they are not inconſiſtent things, but have an entire agreement one with another: Nay, ſo cloſely are they linked, that if we reject either one or the other, or advance one to the prejudice of the other, we cannot avoid the running into dangerous errors and inconveniencies.

The propoſition we have before us is this: *That reaſon and faith are not contradictious things*; or this; *that the religion which is of God, and which it is our duty to believe, doth not in any one part or article of it do violence to our reaſon.*

For the making out this, I lay down theſe following propoſitions:

1. Firſt of all, that nothing that is propoſed to us to be believed as a matter of faith, or an article of religion, is further to be entertained by us than we have a reaſon to convince us of the truth of it.

2. Secondly, That we have no other way to judge, or to be convinced of the truth of any matter of faith, or article of our religion, but the agreeableneſs of it with the principles of our natural reaſon.

3. Thirdly, Whatever therefore is plainly and apparently repugnant to, and inconſiſtent with the principles of natural reaſon, cannot be true; and therefore ought not to be believed by us as an article of religion or a matter of faith.

4. Fourthly, That, notwithſtanding, there may be many things in religion highly reaſonable to be believed, which yet natural reaſon could not diſcover, nor after they are diſcovered can it fully comprehend; there may be reaſon enough to convince us of the truth of them, though

though we have not our reaſon ſo perfect as to be able to ſee perfectly through them, or to anſwer all the difficulties that may be raiſed againſt them.

The clearing theſe four propoſitions will not only fully explain and prove our main point, but alſo obviate all the difficulties and objections that are uſually raiſed in this controverſy. I ſhall therefore ſpeak to them in order.

1. The firſt propoſition is this; That nothing that is propoſed to us to be believed as a matter of faith, or an article of religion, is further to be entertained by us, than we have reaſon given us for the truth of it.

This, I think, is ſo univerſally acknowledged by all mankind, of what perſuaſion or religion ſoever they be, that it would be a needleſs thing to attempt the proof of it. There is no man in the world ever endeavoured to draw another man to his own opinion but he would offer him reaſons why he ſhould embrace that opinion, rather than the contrary. And there is no man ever took up any opinion or perſuaſion, either in religion or in other things, but he either had reaſon, or thought he had reaſon to incline and determine him to it. A man cannot believe as he pleaſeth. How deſirous ſoever he may be, that this or the other thing ſhould be true, ye he cannot bring his mind to aſſent to it, unleſs he have ſome reaſon, or ſomething that looks like a reaſon, that inclines him to it. Whatever power the will of man hath to determine itſelf, yet it is certain the underſtanding muſt always go according to the evidence that is given in to it. It implies a contradiction, that a man ſhould believe a propoſition, any further than he is convinced of the truth of it. And how can he be convinced of the truth of it, further than he is ſatisfied that there are ſolid and ſtrong reaſons

to perſuade him unto it? But to ſpeak more words upon this, is to add light to the ſun.

2. I therefore proceed. The next propoſition we lay down is this, that we have no other meaſure to judge of the truth of any religion, than the agreeableneſs of it with the principles of our natural reaſon.

For the proof of this, if it need any, the former propoſition hath laid a ſufficient foundation. We ought not, nay we cannot believe any thing further than there is reaſon given us for the truth of it. When therefore any thing is propoſed to our belief, it is certain we muſt examine whether there be reaſon ſufficient to perſuade us to believe it. Now how can we examine this otherwiſe than by comparing the thing in queſtion with ſome rules or principles of our own minds, by which we uſe to ſearch out the truth or falſhood of things? If the point recommended to our belief be agreeable to them, we judge it true; if otherwiſe, we are to conclude it falſe. This is the way of proceeding of all mankind, when they deliberate concerning a propoſition, whether it be true or falſe.

Well then, ſome fixed certain rules and principles we muſt have in ourſelves with which we are to compare, and by which we are to judge of the truth or falſhood of things recommended to us. Now the only remaining queſtion is, what thoſe rules and principles are? But indeed it is no queſtion at all; for what other can be aſſigned beſides our natural reaſon? That is to ſay, our underſtandings acting according to thoſe notions that are either connatural with it, or collected from our ſenſes. Theſe are the principles by which we are to judge of all things in the world, that are not ſelf-evident, that is to ſay, that need any proof to recommend them to our belief, and the comparing things

things with theſe principles, and making concluſions from ſuch compariſons, is that which we call reaſon.

Now it is certain, there is no man in the world can aſſign any other ſure way of diſtinguiſhing truth from falſhood but this. And it is certain that every man in the world in all other things that do moſt nearly concern him, doth always make his judgment by this rule and meaſure. And if in all other things, why not in matters of religion? What pretence, what colour is there that religion only ſhould be exempted from the tribunal of reaſon, to which all mens other concernments are confeſſedly ſubject? If indeed religion was a thing deſigned to deſtroy and take away our natures; if it was one thing to be a man, and another thing to be religious, there would be ſome colour for this. But there is no ſuch thing. God in obliging us to religion conſiders us as men. He doth not thereby intend to deſtroy our human natures, but to improve them. Now if in matters of religion we muſt be ſuppoſed to be dealt with as men, it is certain we can have no principles to judge of religion by but only thoſe common principles of reaſon which are planted in all the men in the world, and which conſtitute their natures, and diſtinguiſh them from brutes, and by which they are governed in all their humane actions.

If any man reply to this, that in things of religion we are to be guided by divine revelation, and not by reaſon, foraſmuch as reaſon is utterly unable to direct us in the things of God; we readily and heartily grant it. But this makes nothing againſt what I have now laid down. For this is that we ſay: We are to judge of that revelation whether it be from God or no, whether it be a divine revelation or an impoſture; I ſay

we are to judge of this by the principles of our reaſon. It is acknowledged by us as a certain thing, that after we are once convinced that God hath made a revelation of his will in any point, we are without more ado to believe it, and ſtedfaſtly to adhere to it. And there is the greateſt reaſon in the world that we ſhould ſo do. For it is one of the firſt principles of reaſon that God cannot deceive others, nor be deceived himſelf; and therefore whatever he ſaith muſt be true. But then the matter in doubt is how ſhall we be ſatisfied that God hath made ſuch a revelation? Muſt we take every doctrine for a divine revelation that any one doth confidently affirm to be from God? If ſo, then we ſhall never be ſecure from being impoſed upon, and we ſhall have every day doctrines obtruded upon us for divine truth, which are utterly inconſiſtent with, and contradictory to one another. On the other ſide, if we muſt not take every thing for a revelation from God that pretends to be ſo; then there is a neceſſity we ſhould examine whether that which comes recommended to us as ſuch, doth really deſerve that name. But what rules or meaſures can we examine this by, but the principles of our natural inbred ſenſes and reaſon; thoſe principles of truth which God hath implanted in our natures antecedently to all poſitive revelations of his will?

If any man will not be content with this, but will object further in this matter, that we are not to judge of God's revelations by reaſon, but by the Spirit; in order to the making an anſwer to this, all that we deſire to know is, what they who thus affirm do mean by the Spirit? If by the Spirit they mean only the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit given to well-diſpoſed perſons for the removing of their prejudices, and ſinful

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luſts, that may hinder them from embracing the truth, and the better enabling them to make uſe of their reaſon, and diſcerning faculties in the ſearching and finding out the truth, we grant what they ſay. We do believe, that the Spirit of God doth thus concur with every good man to the working faith in him, or the making him a believer. But if by the Spirit, which they ſay is to judge of the things pertaining to God and religion, they mean a principle in a man that hath no agreement or communication with that other principle of his nature which we call reaſon; but is a thing put in oppoſition, and contradiction to that, then we utterly deny what they affirm. We ſay, that ſuch a Spirit ought not to have any influence upon our underſtandings, or to be any rule or meaſure of our belief. For at this rate we could never have any fixed rule to diſtinguiſh between the Spirit of truth and the ſpirit of falſehood, and every impoſture of the devil's might paſs with us for the dictate of the Spirit of God; and we could no way help it; in a word we had no way to try ſpirits, but muſt believe every ſpirit pretending to come from God: Which is expreſsly contrary to the apoſtle's command, who bids us *not to believe every ſpirit, but to try the ſpirits whether they be of God or no.* 1 John iv. 1. How much ſoever therefore the Spirit of God doth influence us in order to the making us believers, this doth not in the leaſt hinder, but that we are to try and examine the ſpirits; that is, to uſe our utmoſt ſkill and endeavour to find out whether that ſpirit that would perſuade us to the belief of ſuch and ſuch doctrines be really from God or no. And what rule have we to try the ſpirits by but the principles of reaſon which is planted in our natures: That is to ſay our ſenſes, and our common notions,

and the dictates of that natural religion which every man is born with. By the agreement or diſagreement of any doctrine propoſed to thoſe principles, we only can certainly know whether the revelation that propounds that doctrine be from God or no.

And thus much let it ſuffice to have ſpoken of our ſecond poſition.

3. The third aſſertion is this: That whatever is propounded to us in matters of religion, if it do plainly and evidently contradict the principles of natural reaſon, and be repugnant thereto, we ought not to believe it as coming from God, becauſe it cannot be true.

I put in theſe terms of plainly and evidently, becauſe ſeveral points there may be of that nature, that they may ſeemingly claſh with reaſon, though they do not; and may ſeem to contradict ſenſe, which yet do not. And ſo ill judges are ſome men, both of ſenſe and reaſon, that they may reject a point as inconſiſtent with both, which yet to all the wiſer ſort of men will appear highly agreeable to them. But whatever is plainly and evidently repugnant to the common ſenſe of mankind, that is to ſay, contradicts thoſe principles by which all men diſtinguiſh between truth and falſehood, and in ſuch things and objects where ſenſe and reaſon have a fair ſcope to exerciſe themſelves; I ſay, whatever in this caſe is repugnant to thoſe principles, ought not to be admitted by us as a truth of God, nor conſequently ought it to obtain our belief.

For if we are to judge of the truth of divine revelations by the principles of our reaſon, then certainly whatever is contained in any revelation which pretends to be divine, that is evidently contradictory to thoſe principles, that very thing ought to be a juſt and ſufficient argument to make us reject that revelation as to

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that point; for it is certain that truth cannot be contrary to truth. But now we ſuppoſe that our reaſon and common notions and ſenſes are all true, and to be relied upon; otherwiſe they would be no rules for us to meaſure and judge of other things by. Whatever therefore doth contradict them cannot be true, and conſequently cannot be ſuppoſed to come from God.

But ſome may ſay, May not God reveal ſomething to mankind in religion, and oblige them to believe it, which is contrary to reaſon? I anſwer he can no more be ſuppoſed to do this, than he can be ſuppoſed to deny himſelf. For thoſe natural notices we have for the diſtinguiſhing of truth and falſehood of things that are repreſented to us are from him. They are the image of his own mind impreſſed upon our ſouls. And therefore, whatever doth not agree with theſe faithful copies, cannot poſſibly agree with the original. If we once be brought to believe that God's revelations in any part of them do contradict the common principles of reaſon implanted in our nature, we muſt of neceſſity at the ſame time believe, that God can do and undo at the ſame time. That he doth at pleaſure ſo alter the nature of things, that that which was true yeſterday, is not true to-day, and that which is now true and acknowledged to be true by us (becauſe we have the beſt evidence in the world for the truth of it) ſhall upon a new revelation that he may make, ceaſe to be true to-morrow. Which poſition, if it do not deſtroy all truth and all morality, I do not know what doth.

The uſe I make of this point is this: That when any perſon endeavours to perſuade us to the belief of any point, we ſhould in the firſt place ſatisfy ourſelves that the point is not repugnant to our reaſon, or our

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ſenſes. If it be, we ought not by any means to give ear to it. Nay, by this very thing we may certainly know, that the man that would perſuade us, is either an impoſtor himſelf, or impoſed upon, ſince he teacheth that for a divine truth which is a perfect falſehood.

As for inſtance. If any man will endeavour to draw me over to the belief of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation; that is to ſay, to believe that in the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, that which appears to me to be bread and wine, is not really bread and wine, but the very body and blood of Chriſt that was broken and ſhed ſixteen hundred years ago, and is now (as all chriſtians agree) at the right hand of God in heaven: I ought not to believe him in this, be he otherwiſe never ſo credible a perſon, becauſe it contradicts my own reaſon, and my ſenſes. And tho' for my conviction he quotes a thouſand times the words of our Saviour, who ſaid, *this is my body, and this is my blood*, yet I muſt ſay, that our Saviour could not mean theſe words in the ſenſe that he means them; for if he did underſtand them in that ſenſe, he muſt in effect tell me I am not to believe my own eyes, nor my own taſte, nor my own feeling, in a plain matter of ſenſe, nor my own reaſon in a thing that is as obvious as any thing in the world.

Again: If a man will preach to me that for the cauſe of religion it is lawful for a biſhop to depoſe and murder ſovereign princes; that I may take oaths of fidelity to the government, and yet break them upon a diſpenſation from the vicar of Chriſt; that I may affirm or deny any thing before an heretical magiſtrate, tho' it be with the ſolemnity of venturing my ſalvation upon it, by ſwearing upon the goſpels; that I am not to keep

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faith with man ſo long as I have a ſecret reſervation in my mind, and am privileged thereto by the licence of my ſpiritual guide; I ſay, whoever would impoſe upon me in ſuch things as theſe, ought, without any other diſpute, to be rejected by me as a cheat. For what he would perſuade me to, is contrary to the natural notions of religion, and juſtice, and honeſty, that are implanted in my mind. And if he pretend any revelation from ſcripture for theſe things, I may certainly deny it, becauſe no revelation, no ſcripture of God can allow of ſuch things; they being contrary to the principles of natural religion; that is, that natural reaſon I have concerning religion, upon the credit of which I am to believe and receive all ſcripture and revelations.

Again: If any one would convince me that I ought to worſhip the bleſſed virgin or any other ſaint, and aſſure me that ſeveral miracles have been wrought for the confirmation of this point; why here I muſt alſo refuſe my aſſent upon the ſame account. If a thouſand miracles had been performed (as are told us) by the images of the virgin, or other ſaints, yet if God hath long before declared that we are to worſhip none but himſelf with divine worſhip; and if that declaration of his has been confirmed by an infinite number of undoubted miracles in old time, both of *Moſes* and the prophets, and Chriſt, and his apoſtles; all the new miracles they they tell us of, ought to ſignify nothing to us. For God having once declared his will and atteſted that declaration by many uncontroulable, unexceptionable miracles, that is to be our ſtanding perpetual rule to walk by: And whatever miracles are oppoſed thereto in theſe latter times, ought not to be regarded by us; but we are to look upon them either as the deluſions of

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the devil, or the figments and impostures of designing men. For it is an eternal and unalterable principle of reason, that what God hath once made a law to mankind, and hath declared likewise that he will never alter that law, or put a new one in the place of it, that law shall always bind, whatever pretences of new credentials or attestations from heaven be made use of to make us believe that it is repealed or dispensed with.

Lastly, if any man will be insinuating, that the scripture is now out of doors as being a dead letter, and that it is the Spirit that is to guide us all; that the sacraments of christianity and the historical matters of our faith concerning Jesus Christ's birth, life, and sufferings, are all to be interpreted in a mystical spiritual sense; which sense we are to have from the inspiration of the Spirit that witnesseth within us; such a man as this I ought to abandon as a false prophet, as one that oppoſeth my sense and reason, and sets up a private spirit against the reason of mankind, and the revelation of Jesus Christ, once publickly attested to the satisfaction and conviction of the world.

4. And thus much of my third point. I now proceed to my last proposition: That, notwithstanding what we have said, there may be many things in religion highly reasonable to be believed, which yet natural reason could not discover; nor after they are discovered can it fully comprehend. Though we do affirm, that God doth never oblige us to believe anything contrary or repugnant to reason; yet at the same time we do heartily acknowledge, that he hath obliged us to believe several things which cannot be demonstrated by reason; nay, and some things, which reason cannot so perfectly fathom as to master all the difficulties of them. But yet for all that, there is infinite reason that we should be-

believe theſe things; and in the belief of them, we proceed upon thoſe very foundations of common ſenſe and reaſon, that we have all this while been eſtabliſhing.

For inſtance; it cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon, that God ſhould ſend his Son Jeſus Chriſt for the ſalvation of mankind; much leſs that he ſhould expoſe him to a cruel death, as a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world. Nor can it be proved by reaſon, that this Jeſus that died for us, muſt at the end of the world, come again viſibly in perſon, to judge the quick and the dead; and that then, all men that have ever died, ſhall be raiſed; that is to ſay, they ſhall have bodies united to their ſouls, ſo as to find themſelves perfectly the ſame perſons, which they were in this world; (which is that which we call the reſurrection.) I ſay, reaſon could not have found out any of theſe things. The moſt ſagacious and contemplative man upon earth, could never have diſcovered this method of God's proceeding with mankind. Or, if he ſhould have happened on ſome thoughts or fancies about ſome of theſe points, yet he could never, by ſolid arguments, have proved them to be certain truths: becauſe, they altogether depended upon the pleaſure of God. So that theſe things we are to believe perfectly, upon the authority of divine revelation. We therefore know them to be true, becauſe God hath told us that they are ſo. But then, after God hath revealed theſe doctrines to us by his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles, they do appear ſo highly reaſonable in themſelves, and ſo every way ſuitable to the goodneſs and juſtice, and wiſdom of God, that any man's reaſon, if it be ſincere, and pure, and unprejudiced, cannot but heartily cloſe with them, and aſſent to them, as ſoon as ever they are fairly propoſed with the evidence that attends them.

Nor is there any objection to be made againſt them, either in point of poſſibility, or in point of reaſonableneſs, or in point of evidence, but what any conſidering man can eaſily quit himſelf of.

But then, there is another ſort of doctrines, which our chriſtianity obliges us to believe, which are more myſterious; that is to ſay, do not lie ſo plain and obvious to our reaſon, even after they are revealed to us, as the former do. But ſo much are they above the capacity of our ſhort underſtandings, that we muſt believe them, without being able to have a full and adequate comprehenſion of them. And ſuch are theſe two articles of our religion, the doctrine of the incarnation, and the doctrine of the Trinity. Not that theſe doctrines are unintelligible; or, that we cannot form a conſiſtent notion of them; for it is certainly otherwiſe; we may truly underſtand, and form a conſiſtent notion of both theſe points: But this is the thing, by reaſon of the infinity of the object that is here preſented to us, and the ſhallowneſs of our finite underſtandings, that are to conſider them, we muſt of neceſſity fall ſhort of ſeeing ſo clearly through theſe points, as not to be intangled with great difficulties, when we would overcurioufly pry into them. But then, all this may well conſiſt with what we have been aſſerting. Notwithſtanding this, we do in no wiſe act contrary to reaſon or ſenſe, in giving aſſent to thoſe doctrines, how much above our reaſon ſoever they be. We are ſtill *able to give an anſwer to every one that ſhall aſk us a reaſon of* the faith *that is in us*, even as to theſe two ſublime myſteries. There is nothing in them contrary to our common ſenſe and reaſon, and ſo it is poſſible they may be true. God Almighty (and that we can prove) hath actually revealed and taught them by his Son:

Son: And ſo we are certain they are true. Here is ſufficient ſatisfaction for our reaſon, and here is ſufficient evidence for our faith. All that we have here to do, is to examine, whether Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles have taught theſe doctrines: and when we are convinced of that, to believe them heartily, to profeſs them conſtantly, to worſhip God according to the diſcoveries he hath made of his nature, and to acquieſce in theſe revelations without troubling ourſelves or others with nice queſtions and ſpeculations about them.

But yet, here it is that we are now-a-days briſkly attacked by the patrons of that doctrine, which I touched upon under my laſt head. Rather than we ſhall not believe tranſubſtantiation, they would have us call in queſtion the trinity and Chriſt's incarnation. For, ſay they, you have the ſame evidence in ſcripture for the one doctrine, that you have for the other; and as for the point of reaſon, the one is every whit involved with as many difficulties, and abſurdities, as the other is pretended to be; why therefore ſhould you not equally believe both?

I have not now time to anſwer this argument as it deſerves to be anſwered. Only I leave with you theſe three differences between the two doctrines, tranſubſtantiation on the one hand, and the trinity and incarnation on the other.

The firſt is, that there is not the ſame evidence in the word of God for the one, that there is for the other: The former being no where evidently taught there; no, nor thought to be taught there by the chriſtians of the firſt ages: The latter being plainly delivered by Chriſt and his apoſtles, as the very foundation of chriſtianity, and the faith into which all believers were to be baptized.

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The ſecond difference is, that tranſubſtantiation is plainly about a matter that falls under the cognizance of our ſenſes and reaſon. But the doctrines of the trinity and incarnation, have an infinite God for their object, to whoſe nature neither our ſenſes nor our reaſon is any ways adequate or commenſurate.

The third difference is, that there are manifeſt abſurdities and contradictions in the one doctrine, but none at all in the other two. Though they be above our reaſon, yet they are not contrary to it.

But I may ſpeak more of theſe Things, and of this text hereafter. In the mean time conſider what you have heard, and God give you underſtanding in all things.

N. B. See theſe three laſt points of difference enlarged upon, in the latter end of the ſecond ſermon againſt tranſubſtantiation.

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SERMON II.

Every man to judge for himſelf in things neceſſary to ſalvation. The different ways preſcribed by the *Roman Catholicks*, and the *Proteſtants*, for the coming to the true faith, compared.

1 PET. iii. 15.

——*Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.*

TWO general points I laid down to inſiſt upon from this text.

Firſt, that faith and reaſon are not inconſiſtent one with another, but may well ſtand together. If we be obliged to *be able to give an account of the reaſonableneſs of our faith*, (which is the ſame thing which is here called hope) then certainly we are not obliged to believe any thing which is unreaſonable, or that we cannot give a reaſon for believing it.

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Secondly, That it is not enough that our faith or religion be reasonable in itself, but it is the duty of every professor of that faith, so to satisfy himself of the reasonableness of his belief, as to be able *to answer* them that *ask a reason* of it. And therefore every man not only may, but ought to enquire into the grounds of his faith, or religion, and not *so* to rely upon any human authority, as to believe, without examination, every thing that is proposed to him.

These are the two points, or doctrines, or observations, which I raised upon this text: and which I designed both to explain and to vindicate. The former of them I have already dispatched. I now proceed to the other.

II. It is not indeed in direct words asserted in the text, but it is by necessary consequence inferr'd from it. For if every christian ought so well to inform himself about what he believes, as to be able *to give* others *a reason of his faith*, then he certainly not only may, but ought to examine every thing that is propos'd to his belief, and upon that examination to make a judgment, whether it is reasonable for him to believe it or no.

This consequence is so direct and full from the text, that there is no avoiding of it. And indeed, this is no more than what is every where taught and delivered as the privilege, and as the duty of all christians, even those that are private persons. It is not to the bishops and pastors, and guides of souls only, but to the people, that St. Paul directed that precept of his, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, that they should *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*, v. 21. Every thing was to be tried and examined before they admitted of it. And if after that trial

trial and examination they found it to be a good doctrine, a doctrine agreeable to the goſpel, then they were to embrace it, and ſo to hold it as never to depart from it.

It was likewiſe to all chriſtians, that St. John wrote when he ſaid theſe words, *Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God: becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world,* 1 Ep. iv. 1. What is the meaning that we are not to *believe every ſpirit, but to try the ſpirits, whether they be of God?* Certainly this; That we are not to believe every one that takes upon him to be an inſpired man, or that would pretend to deliver doctrines to us, as the infallible truths of God: But we are to examine thoſe that make this pretence, whether they can really produce their credentials that they come God. We are to examine likewiſe the doctrines they teach, whether they be really agreeable to thoſe principles of natural and revealed truths which we are ſure came from God. And there is great reaſon why we ſhould all thus try before we truſt, for as the apoſtle adds, *there are many falſe prophets*, that is, falſe teachers, *gone out into the world.*

Furthermore, What is the meaning of all thoſe ſeveral exhortations and declarations of our Saviour, where he deſired the people *to ſearch the ſcriptures*, John v. 39. as the true way to bring them to the belief of him and his doctrines? Where he cautions them againſt calling any man *Rabbi*, or *maſter, upon earth; becauſe they have but one maſter or teacher*, Matt. xxiii. v. 8, 10. and that is, our Lord Jeſus? Where he reproaches them for too blindly following their Guides, telling them, if the *blind lead the blind, both ſhall fall into the ditch*, Matt. xv. 4. Where he

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expoſtulateth with them for relying too much upon the authority of their teachers, and therefore rejecting his doctrines, becauſe his ſuperiors did not believe it? *Why of your own ſelves*, ſaith he, *did ye not judge that which is right?* Luke xii. 75. Sure if any thing can be plain, it is from the New-teſtament, that God not only allows, but alſo requires, that every man in matters of his ſalvation ſhould judge for himſelf: And not ſo give up himſelf to the conduct of any humane authority, but that he ought ſtill to be at liberty to examine doctrines of faith by the common principles of reaſon and divine revelation; and according as he finds them agreeable to, or inconſiſtent with thoſe principles, either to admit them, or reject them.

I will but mention one thing more upon this head, and I have done. Mind theſe words of St. Paul: *If we*, ſays he, *or an angel from heaven, preach to you any other goſpel than what ye have received, let him be accurſed*, Gal. i. 8. How! not an apoſtle, not the greateſt of all the apoſtles, St. Paul, who labour'd more abundantly in the work of the Lord than all the apoſtles, not for him to preach another goſpel? No, nor an angel from heaven; tho' he came with never ſo many ſigns and wonders, (as undoubtedly, if an angel from heaven was to preach, it would be with miracles in abundance;) I ſay for theſe not to be believed, when they taught things contrary to, and inconſiſtent with the ſtanding revelations of goſpel, as we have them in the ſcriptures? Nay, not only not to be believed, but to be abhorred; to be utterly rejected as impoſtors, and falſe prophets, and to be accurſed? I ſay, what are we to gather from hence? Certainly if we can gather any thing, we may gather theſe three things:

1. That there is but one goſpel. That very goſpel which was preach'd by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and which we have conveyed down to us in the books of the New-teſtament.

2. That whatever article of faith is propoſed to our belief, if it be repugnant to that goſpel once delivered to us, is to be rejected as a falſe doctrine; and the preachers of ſuch doctrines, let them be apoſtles or angels, let them ſhew never ſo many miracles for the proof of their miſſion, are not to be heard but held as falſe prophets.

3. That every man who hath once been inſtructed in the goſpel of Chriſt, and is a profeſſor of it, is to judge for himſelf, whether any doctrine that is propoſed to him be agreeable to that goſpel or no. If it be inconſiſtent with the goſpel which he hath once received, he is to reject it, tho' St. Paul, or an angel from heaven ſhould preach it to him. I ſay, of this every man is to be judge for himſelf; for otherwiſe why ſhould St. Paul ſay this to the people of *Galatia?* Why ſhould he tell them ſo ſolemnly, that they ſhould adhere to that goſpel he had preach'd to them, notwithſtanding all the pretences of the falſe teachers that were come among them? Nay, he tells them, *that if he himſelf, or an angel from heaven, ſhould preach to them any other goſpel than what they had received before, they ſhould not be heard.* Did he not plainly in this make them the judges of that goſpel, and of what was conſiſtent with it, and inconſiſtent with it? Was not that goſpel the ſtandard by which they were to meaſure all other new doctrines? And were not they themſelves to be the meaſurers? Were not they to be the judges?

Certainly it muſt be ſo; and for the making it appear I would only aſk this: Whether it had been a fault

fault or a sin in the Galatians, after St. Paul had thus warned them, to have taken up, or given credit to, any doctrines of the false apostles, contrary to the gospel? If it be answered, that this were a sin and a fault in them if they did so, then I infer undeniably, that they were true and proper judges of what was the doctrine of the gospel and what was not. It was their parts, having been instructed in the true gospel, to have compared the novel doctrines of the false teachers with it, and accordingly as they found them disagreeing to the gospel, to have rejected them. If this had not been their duty, it could not have been their sin to have followed the false teachers in their new doctrines.

So that the inference remains strong and undeniable, that in matters wherein man's salvation is concerned, he is to be a judge for himself. And God having given him a rule to judge by, he is to examine all doctrines that are proposed to him as necessary to be believ'd, by that rule; and whatsoever doctrine he finds different from, or inconsistent with that rule, he is to reject, whosoever the man be, or whatsoever the church be, that proposeth them to him.

And thus I think I have sufficiently made good my point. But I ought not thus to leave it. How plain soever this matter seems to be, yet there are at this day (1687) no small stirs made about it. Nay, I believe I may say, that upon this very point the main disputes do turn, which do at this day divide the christian church in these parts of the world.

Thus far we are all agreed, That the religion of Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. And likewise we are agreed, That every man ought so far to enquire into Christ's religion, as to be satisfied what it

is, and where it is to be found. But then here it is we begin to differ.

As chriſtianity now goes in theſe weſtern parts of the world, there are two different ways preſcribed for the coming to the knowledge of Chriſt's religion; and each of them is vigorouſly contended for by their ſeveral parties.

The one way is that which the Roman-catholics go, and in ſhort it is this: That every man, as to the concernments of his ſoul, is ſo far to enquire and examine, till he be ſatisfied which is the true church of Chriſt. But after he hath once found that true church, he has no need of further examining, but he is from henceforward to yield up himſelf to the government of that church, and to believe every thing which that church teacheth without further examination; becauſe that the true church is infallible, neither can be deceiv'd itſelf, nor deceive others.

The other way is that which the proteſtants go, and it is this: That Jeſus Chriſt being the ſole author of our faith and religion, we ought not, we cannot believe any thing as an article of faith, or as neceſſary to ſalvation, but what he and his inſpired apoſtles taught; nor have we any certain way of knowing what they taught, but by the holy ſcriptures they left behind them. Theſe we are ſure are the word of God, and do contain all the neceſſary points that Chriſt and his apoſtles preached to the world; and *whatever is not contained in them, or may not be proved by them, is not,* cannot be *required of any to be believed as of neceſſity to ſalvation,* (as our church in her articles doth word it.) And therefore whatever doctrine is recommended to us as an article of faith, if we find that the ſcriptures teach it, or that it may by good

conſequence be proved from thence, we do heartily and willingly embrace it. On the other ſide, if we find any doctrine which is recommended to us as an article of faith, to be repugnant to the holy ſcriptures, or to claſh with them, we do certainly reject it. And this right and privilege of examining matters of religion, and trying them by the holy ſcriptures, we do not ſo appropriate to the guides of the church (though they of all others, as they are beſt qualified, ſo are they moſt eſpecially obliged to do this) but we do allow it alſo to every man of a private capacity, ſo far as he hath means and opportunities of informing himſelf.

For ſince, as the Roman-catholics ſay, every man's ſalvation depends upon his profeſſing the true religion of Jeſus Chriſt, it is but infinitely reaſonable, that every man ſhould judge for himſelf about that religion. And ſince, as we ſay, (and moſt of them likewiſe acknowledge) that all the religion of Jeſus Chriſt is contained in the ſcriptures, it is but infinitely reaſonable (ſay we) that every man ſhould be well ſatisfied, that the doctrines which are propoſed to him as articles of faith, are really the doctrines of holy ſcripture. And whether they be ſo or not, he is to be the ſole judge himſelf, taking in all the beſt helps he can have for the making ſuch a judgment.

This is a plain account of the two ways that are preſcrib'd or advis'd for the coming to the true faith, the one by the Roman-catholics, the other by us.

In this both agree, That every man is allow'd, nay is bound to make enquiry or examination of his religion. We are all agreed, that every man ſhould *be able to give a reaſon for the hope that is in him.* But then here we differ. The Roman-catholics ſay, we

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are to examine till we have found the true church; but when once we have found that, we are for ever after to be concluded by that church's determinations. The proteſtants ſay, That a man cannot know the true church, but by examining the doctrines which that church holds and teacheth, whether they be Chriſt's doctrines or no; and there being no way to know that, but by examining whether they do really agree with thoſe doctrines that are taught in the holy ſcriptures, I ſay, ſince this is the caſe, there is a neceſſity of allowing every particular man to try his faith by the holy ſcriptures, and after that trial to judge for himſelf.

So that you ſee here is a material difference between us. The Roman-catholics do only ſo far inquire into religion, as to find the true church, and after that they ſubmit to their church's guides in all things. The proteſtants do inquire into Chriſt's religion, as it is taught by the word of God, and by that they find out the true church. The one believe the doctrines of religion for the church's ſake that teaches them: The other believe the church for the doctrine's ſake that ſhe teacheth, as being in all things agreeable to the word of God. The one take up their religion from the church: The other take up their church from its religion. Or if you would have me expreſs this buſineſs in the language of my text; if a proteſtant be required *to give a reaſon of the hope that is in him*, it will be neceſſary for him to give a rational account of all the articles of his faith. But if a Roman-catholic be required to do this, it is ſufficient to ſay, that he reſts ſatisfied in the judgment of his ſuperiors; or, to uſe the words of the Rhemiſh teſtament, *The man ſaith enough, and defendeth himſelf ſufficiently*,

ficiently, that anſwers he is a catholic, and that he will live and die in that faith, and that his church can give a reaſon of all things which are demanded of him. So that, if the church be but able to give a reaſon of the faith, it is no great matter whether the man that profeſſeth that faith be able to give an anſwer or no.

And now, having laid before you the two different ways of giving a reaſon of our faith, I will, if you pleaſe, fairly examine both of them. And I will begin with the Roman-catholics way of inquiring and giving a reaſon of our faith.

And that, as I told you, is this. That tho' we are every one to examine and enquire about our religion, and ſo *to be able to give a reaſon of our faith*, yet the main thing we are to enquire or examine into is this: *Which is the true church where infallibility is lodged?* for after we have found that church (as we find it no where but in the church of Rome) our enquiry is at an end. We are from henceforward to believe, and to obey the church.

This is the point I am now to diſcuſs. And I will do it with all the fairneſs and all the plainneſs I poſſibly can; tho' all that I ſhall do at this time towards it, is only to aſk theſe two or three queſtions:

Firſt of all, ſince it is acknowledged by them, that we are to make uſe of our beſt ſkill, and reaſon, and ſagacity for the finding of the true church, how comes it about, that all on a ſudden, after we have found that true church, we muſt diſcard theſe things as uſeleſs tools, and never after employ either our ſkill, or our reaſon, or our natural ſagacity for the making a judgment of any point that concerns our ſouls? This is very hard, and unfair dealing with thoſe parts that God Almighty hath given us. In all other concernments

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of our lives we find, and are ſenſible, that thoſe powers and faculties in us, which firſt enable us to underſtand any buſineſs, and to ſet about it, we have need of in the conduct of that buſineſs ever after.

In every paltry deſign of this world, a man thinks it not enough that he hath laid his projects well, and put them into good hands, but if he means to have ſucceſs in his deſigns, he is obliged to purſue them, and to make uſe of all the talents of wit and induſtry he hath, to bring them about. Reaſon is never to forſake him, or if it do, it is ten to one but he is forſaken of others upon whom he depended. But now, as the caſe ſtands in religion, according to the Roman-catholic doctrine, reaſon, and thinking, and ſtudying, and examination, and induſtry, and ſearch, tho' they be neceſſary tools to be made uſe of for the putting a man into good hands, yet after he is in thoſe hands, he is to throw all theſe things away, and never after to make uſe of them. Doth this look like a doctrine of God? No certainly. Every one that underſtands the dignity of his own nature, and knows what reaſon is, and how far men differ from brutes, and in what things they excel them, will be of another opinion. How can any man conceive, that God ſhould have given us our reaſons and underſtandings merely for the finding the true church, and afterwards thoſe reaſons and underſtandings ſhould be altogether inſignificant as to matters of religion; that we ſhould have no uſe of them, but be acted like ſo many machines? Is this to *offer a reaſonable ſervice to God?*

The Roman-catholic doctrine ſuppoſeth us all to have eyes, and to be able to chuſe our way ſo long as we are heretics, or ſo long as we are wavering; all that time they allow us to have our eye-ſight, and

then they bid us to enquire, and examine, and to prove, and to try. But when afterwards any of us hath found the true church (that is their church) then we are no longer to examine, or to prove, or try. But what is this but in plain *Engliſh* to tell us, God hath given you eyes for the choice of your guide, but after you are ſatisfied, that you have light on a good guide, you are from henceforward to put out your eyes, and for ever after to act as you are order'd by your guide.

Another queſtion I would aſk is this: They tell us that we are to enquire and examine matters of religion, till we have found the true church, but after that we are to acquieſce in the determinations of that church. Now the queſtion I would aſk is, How we ſhall find the true church any other way than by comparing the doctrines that the church holds, with the holy ſcriptures?

I know that the Roman-catholics have taken a great deal of pains to give us the notes of the true church. And of all others, cardinal Bellarmine has taken the greateſt pains, and hath given us fifteen notes of the true church, and one of thoſe notes is *ſanctity of doctrine*. We do all grant, that he is perfectly right in this, however he may be miſtaken in the reſt. For it is certain, that the true church of Chriſt is to be known by the doctrines it teacheth; and no church can be a true church, unleſs it profeſſeth and teacheth Chriſt's true doctrines, as to all the foundations of chriſtianity. But now if this be ſo, as it certainly is, how can any man pretend to know the true church, without a particular examination of the doctrines that that church teaches? If one mark of the true church be (as Bellarmine ſays it is) that it ſhould teach the doctrine

ctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, then certainly we cannot know the true church till we have examined its doctrines; and therefore before we can know the goodneſs of a church, we are to examine and enquire whether the doctrines that are taught in it be all honeſt, and chriſtian, and pious, and agreeable to the word of God. So that after all, every man is to examine by the word of God, what things he is to believe in order to his ſalvation.

But thirdly, here is a greater point yet behind. For admitting the church of Chriſt to be infallible, nay, admitting the church of Rome (which pretends to be the catholic church) to be infallible, yet would private men be the better for it? Would they be more ſecure from errors in faith than we who pretend to no infallibility? This is a very great queſtion, unleſs every particular guide that is to convey the church's faith down to us, be infallible likewiſe; nay, unleſs every private man that hearkens to that guide were alſo as infallible in taking the true ſenſe of the doctrines, as the teacher is infallible in propoſing them.

And laſtly, here comes the great queſtion of all: How doth it appear that that church, or any church, or all churches taken together, are infallible *in all things that they propoſe as articles of faith?* I muſt confeſs, I take this to be a very difficult thing to be proved. Nay, I ſay further, it is impoſſible to be proved. Nay, as far as a negative can be proved, we can prove the contrary.

But I dare not now enter upon theſe points, but ſhall reſerve them, together with what remains upon this argument, to another opportunity.

SERMON III.

Concerning the Infallibility of the Church. Which being admitted, in the ſenſe of the Roman-catholics, would not anſwer the ends they propoſe to ſerve by it.

1. PET. iii. 15.

——*Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you.*

THE point which I was laſt inſiſting upon was this: That it appears from this text, that it is the duty of every chriſtian ſo to ſatisfy himſelf about the reaſonableneſs of his belief, as *to be able to anſwer them that aſk a reaſon of it.* And therefore every man not only may, but ought to enquire into the grounds of his faith or religion, and not ſo to rely upon the authority of his guides, as to believe, without examination, every thing that is propoſed to them.

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This is the point before us. And I endeavour'd to make it good by ſuch arguments as I thought moſt convincing, *viz.* ſuch as were drawn from plain texts of ſcripture.

After this, I proceeded to give an account of the two different ways and methods that are now on foot among us, as to this matter. We are all agreed, that every man is allowed, nay, is bound to make an inquiry or examination about his religion. We are all agreed, that every man ſhould *be able to give a reaſon of the hope that is in him.* But then here we differ: One party ſaith, that we are to examine till we have found the true church: But when we have found that, we are to be for ever after concluded by that church's determinations, becauſe that the true church, wherever it is, is infallible to all that ſhe propoſeth as matters of faith. The other party ſaith, That a man cannot know the true church, but by examining the doctrines which that church holds and teacheth, whether they be Chriſt's doctrines or no. And there being no way to know that, but by examining whether they do really agree with thoſe doctrines, which, we are ſure, were taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and are contained in the holy ſcriptures; I ſay, ſince this is the caſe, there is a neceſſity of allowing every perſon to try his faith by the holy ſcriptures, (making uſe of the beſt means he hath, for the right underſtanding of them) and after trial to judge for himſelf. So that you ſee here is a material difference. The one ſide would have men only ſo far inquire into religion, as to find the true church, and after that, to ſubmit to their guides in all things. The other ſide would have men to inquire into Chriſt's religion, as it is taught in the word of God, and to make uſe of their own judg-

ment all along. The one believes the particular doctrines of religion, for the church's ſake that teacheth them: The other believes the church for the ſake of the doctrine that ſhe teacheth. The one takes up his religion from the church, the other takes up his church from its religion.

Having thus given an account, wherein the main difference between the two churches lies, as to this point, I proceed to enquire which of theſe two ways, theirs, or ours, doth moſt recommend itſelf to a prudent man. And here I urged two things againſt their way, and for ours; that their way ſeems very hard and unnatural, becauſe it puts an affront upon the faculties that God hath given us, for the examining and judging of things by; and Secondly, that it ſeems to be deſtructive of itſelf; for ſince both ſides are agreed, that that cannot be the true church, which doth not hold the true doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſince they themſelves do aſſign it as a mark, or a note, whereby we may come to know the true church, namely, that it holds Chriſt's true doctrines; how is it poſſible for any man to find the true church, without firſt examining what doctrines that church holdeth, and trying them by the ſcriptures, whether thoſe doctrines be the doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, or no: ſtill making uſe, as I ſaid before, of the beſt means he hath, for the right underſtanding of thoſe ſcriptures. And if thus much will be allowed us, we will contend for no more.

Thus far I went the laſt time. And now, in the third place, I have this other thing to add about the inconveniency of their way more than ours, and that is; allowing that to be true, which they ground this their method upon, *viz. That the true church is*

infallible; I say, allowing this to be true, yet it doth not at all appear, that particular persons, that follow their way, have any better means of coming to the knowledge of a right faith, than they have among us, and according to our method; and perhaps not near so good.

Both they and we acknowledge the scriptures are infallible, and we say, that they are likewise so plain in all necessary points, that every christian, with the help of such means, as he hath daily at hand in our church, may rightly understand them, as to all points needful to his salvation; so that every honest christian among us may have a sure foundation to build his faith upon.

On the other side their position is, That a private man cannot be certain that he is in the right way, unless he be certain that he adheres to the doctrines of the church, and squares his faith by them; the church being the only infallible interpreter of scripture.

Well now, we will suppose a man heartily to believe this: is satisfied that he hath not true faith, unless he believes according to the faith of the church. Here a question ariseth, How shall he be able to know whether he believes as the church believeth, that he holds all points of faith as the church holdeth them? This he must be able certainly to know, or else he hath no better ground for his faith than his neighbours. Tho' the church is infallible in what she teaches, yet what doth this infallibility signify to him, unless he knows what the church teacheth? But how shall he know that any better than he can know what the scripture teacheth? Nay, how can he know that half so easily as he may do the other? It being certain, that the definitions of the church, in matters of faith,

faith, as they are more in number, ſo they are more nice and intricate than thoſe of the ſcripture are.

Well, but to this it is anſwered, That private men, who have not abilities and opportunities of learning the doctrines of the church from its authentic decrees, muſt reſt ſatisfied in the judgment and direction of their particular guides, and take the doctrines of the church from them. Well this is very true. But here the queſtion returns. Are particular guides infallible, or no? If they be not, then it is poſſible that the guides themſelves may be miſtaken, and if ſo, they may miſlead the man that truſts to them; and then what ſervice doth the church's infallibility do him, in order to the certainty of his faith? If it be ſaid, that particular guides are infallible, I only anſwer, it would be well if they were ſo; but yet it is a thing that they themſelves do not pretend to. Well, but ſuppoſing every guide or confeſſor was infallible in all things that he taught for the doctrine of the church, as the head of the church himſelf is, yet ſtill the difficulty is not over. When a guide doth expound the catholic faith to a private man, and the man is certain that he doth rightly expound it, yet how is he certain that he rightly underſtands the meaning of thoſe doctrines that his guide hath declared to him, for the faith of the church? It is not a new thing for thoſe that do make it their buſineſs to inſtruct others as plainly as poſſibly they can in matters of religion, to have their diſcourſe moſt horribly miſunderſtood and perverted by thoſe that hear them. And now, if the thing be ſo, and this be the condition of all private men, that they may miſtake what is taught them, then what ſecurity hath a man that gives up himſelf intirely to the conduct of his guide, that he is not miſtaken in matters

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of faith, any more than we have, who, beſides the uſe of our guides, make uſe likewiſe of our own eyes in examining by the ſcriptures the doctrines they teach us? Nay, I aſk, whether indeed our ſecurity be not much greater than theirs? It ſeems to me, that there is the ſame difference in our caſes, as there is (to make the moſt favourable inſtance I can) between a man's taking up the truth of a relation at the third or fourth hand from a credible perſon, and ſo depending upon the truth of it, as he underſtands it, from him, without further examination; and a man's taking the ſame ſtory from the ſame perſon, but yet withal not ſticking there, but taking pains to trace it up, as to all the particulars, to the original author. Or, as there is between a man's receiving a piece of coin for current money, merely upon the credit of his goldſmith, without further trial; and a man's both adviſing with his goldſmith, and withal making uſe of all the other helps he can come by, for the diſcerning true money from counterfeit.

But I am got a little out of my way. All that I meant to ſhew under this head is this, That admitting the church to be infallible, yet private men would not be the better for it; would not be more ſecure from errors in faith, than we, who pretend to no infallibility; unleſs every particular guide, that is to convey the church's faith down to us, be infallible likewiſe.

Nay further; admitting every lawful teacher of the church to be infallible in what he taught, yet even that would not ſecure us from error, unleſs alſo it was ſuppoſed, that every man that hears him was as infallible in taking the true ſenſe of thoſe doctrines, as the teacher is infallible in propoſing them. And if theſe things be ſo; I leave it to any man to judge, what

greater matters the church's infallibility, if there was any such thing, could do, as to the securing men from errors in faith, than the protestant way of adhering to the infallible scriptures, in all matters of religion, and making use of all the helps we can, for the right understanding of them.

But Fourthly, let us at last come to the main point, upon which all this dispute is grounded; and that is plainly this: Whether indeed Christ hath any infallible church upon earth, or no? One side affirms, that the true church of Christ is infallible, and that their church is that church. The other side deny that any church is infallible. If what they say be true, then we grant there is all the reason in the world, that we should in all things submit to the definitions of their church, and it would be foolish to dispute any particular points, after we were certain that *that* church had decided them; tho' yet, as I have told you, the means of coming to that certainty are not so infallible.

This is, indeed, the main fundamental point in debate between us, and upon which, in a manner, all the other points of difference do depend. And you see, that for the clear resolution of this point, there are two things to be examined; First, Whether Christ hath any infallible church upon earth? Secondly, Whether that church, which lays claim to this infallibility, be that church of Christ upon earth?

But I shall drop this latter question; for if it do appear that no church is infallible, there will be no need of confuting the claim that any particular church makes to that privilege.

I hope I may inoffensively treat a little on this argument; it is a point wherein our church is nearly concerned, and wherein she hath most expressly declared

clared herſelf: And therefore, it cannot be looked upon as a controverſial point among us. It is a point likewiſe, that is at preſent (1687) the great enquiry of unſettled minds, and therefore it cannot be judged unſeaſonable to ſpeak a little about it. I would not willingly offend or exaſperate any perſon upon earth, and moſt of all, I would avoid it in my preaching. But if, in the choice of the matter of my argument, I ſhould happen to diſpleaſe, yet I promiſe thoſe that are offended, that I will not diſpleaſe them in the manner of my handling it. For I deſire only to inform mens minds, but neither to provoke any mens paſſions, nor to humour or gratify them.

In ſpeaking to this point, I deſire only to premiſe this, in order to your clearer underſtanding the ſtate of the queſtion.

We throw out of our debate all diſputes about the church's infallibility in fundamentals. We are ready to grant, that the church of Chriſt is infallible in all points neceſſary to ſalvation. We do not indeed approve much of the word *infallible*, becauſe in this caſe it is improperly uſed; (for in true ſpeaking, the church is not more infallible in fundamentals, than in thoſe points that are not fundamental.) But ſince the propoſition is often put in theſe terms, we do not change them. But then you are to remember, that all we mean, when we ſay that the catholic church is infallible in fundamentals, amounts to no more than this, That wherever there is a church of Chriſt, (as Chriſt hath promiſed there ſhall always be a church) that church will retain all the foundations of Chriſt's doctrine: Will hold and teach all things that are abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation. And the reaſon why we affirm this is, becauſe in truth, without this, it would

would be no church at all. But then this doth not hinder but that in the first place any particular church may err and fail, even in fundamental points, so as to cease to be any longer a true church. Because God hath not confined his catholic church to any particular place or country. It is enough for the fulfilling of Christ's promises, that there shall for ever, to the end of the world, be somewhere or other a true church of Christ, professing and teaching all the essential necessary points of his religion, which is all that is needful to the making of a church.

Secondly, neither doth this concession of ours hinder, but that every particular church, nay, and all the churches of the world, tho' they may be infallible in fundamentals, (as we have phrased it) that is, tho' they do hold the foundations of Christ's religion, and upon that account are true churches; yet for all that, they may err and mistake, in matters that do not belong to the foundation. They are not secured by any privilege that Christ hath made over to them, even while they continue true churches, either from teaching falsehood for truth, or imposing such practices upon their members, as are inconsistent with the laws of God. So that they cannot be relied upon, merely upon account of their authority, without an examination of their doctrines and practices. And this is indeed the true state of our point.

The question then that is here to be discussed is, Whether Christ hath any church upon earth absolutely, and in all things infallible: So that that church is at all times secured from errors in all things which she proposeth or teacheth, in matters of religion? This I say is the question. And it is determined by the church of *England* in the negative. And my work at present

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is, (though it be a very hard, nay an unreaſonable taſk to prove negatives) yet fairly and modeſtly to lay before you ſome of the many reaſons, why we do not believe that there is any ſuch infallible church, or that Chriſt ever intended there ſhould be ſuch a one, tho' the time will oblige me to be very ſhort.

I. And the firſt thing we offer is this, that if Chriſt had meant that there ſhould be always an infallible church upon earth, we cannot but believe that it would have been ſomewhere or other expreſsly told us in the new teſtament, both that there was an infallibility lodged in the church for ever, and likewiſe, in which of all the churches in the world, this infallibility was lodged; that ſo upon all occaſions, chriſtians in all ages might know where to have recourſe to that infallible church. But now, this not being done in the whole New-teſtament, neither by our Saviour, nor by his apoſtles, it is a ſtrong argument to us, that no ſuch thing was ever intended by them.

We are not ignorant, that ſeveral texts of the new teſtament are produced as proofs of the church's infallibility. But in truth, if thoſe texts be but never ſo little conſidered, and men be not carried away with the mere ſound of words, it will appear to any unbiaſſed reader, that even thoſe texts do not ſpeak at all to the buſineſs of infallibility; or if they do, they concern none but the apoſtles themſelves.

Thus, for inſtance, to prove the church's infallibility, they urge the words of our Saviour to St. *Peter*, *I ſay unto thee, thou art* Peter, *and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* Matt. xvi. 18. But now, whatſoever be here meant by the rock upon which Chriſt would *build his church*, whether St. *Peter*'s perſon, or the faith that he

he then confeſſed, as moſt of the fathers interpret it, yet it is plain, that Chriſt did not here promiſe infallibility to his church, but only a perpetuity. He did not ſay that his church ſhould never err; but he ſaid, that his church ſhould never periſh. Every one that knows any thing of the language of ſcripture will be ſatisfied that is the meaning of the phraſe, that the *gates of hell ſhould never prevail* againſt his church.

Again: They urge theſe words of our Saviour, where he adviſes, that if a *man's brother treſpaſs againſt him*, Mat. xviii. 15. and the matter cannot be made up between them, either by a private admonition, or by referring it to the arbitration of two or three friends; in that caſe, the laſt remedy that the injured perſon had was to tell the buſineſs to the church: And if the man refuſed *to hear the church*, ver. 17. he was then to be accounted as an heathen, or a publican. But what is here meant by telling the church? There lies all the difficulty. Why every one that conſiders the ſcope of the place will plainly ſee, that Chriſt meant no more than this, that if the man could not make a private agreement with his brother that had injured him, he was to complain publickly of the injury to the congregation; and if upon the advice, or rebukes of the governor of the aſſembly the man did not make ſatisfaction, but ſtill continued obſtinate, the injured perſon was not from henceforward, obliged to uſe any more endeavours to bring him to a ſenſe of his fault, but might after that, look upon him as a ſtranger, or an heathen, and no longer as a brother.

This is plainly the ſenſe of the place. But what is this to the buſineſs of infallibility? If it make any thing that way, it rather proves the infallibility of the ſuperiors of every congregation, or the infallibility of every biſhop's

biſhop's conſiſtory, in redreſſing complaints that come before them, than the infallibility of the church in determining matters of faith.

Thus again it is urged, that Chriſt told his apoſtles that *he would be with them*; Matt. xxviii. 20. that is, with them, and with the biſhops that ſucceeded them, *to the end of the world.* Right. Chriſt will always, by the influence of his Spirit, be preſent, not only with the governors of his church, but with every member of his church. But yet I ſay, this doth not imply that every member or every biſhop is infallible. For my part I ſhould think it did more concern our Lord Jeſus, by virtue of this promiſe, to make his church impeccable, than to make it infallible. My meaning is, that it was a much more deſirable thing to ſecure his miniſters and people from the danger of ſin, than from the danger of error. But the former he hath not done, and therefore I much doubt of the latter.

Again: It is urged, that Chriſt ſaid to his apoſtles, that after his departure he would *ſend the Comforter to them, even the Spirit of truth, and when he came he ſhould lead them into all truth.* John xvi. 13. This is very true. And our Saviour was as good as his word, for he did by his Spirit lead the apoſtles into all truth: Nay, to that degree, that we believe they did infallibly, and with an unerring Spirit, preach all the truths of God, and nothing but the truth. But then it is plain that this promiſe was made only to the apoſtles, and not to all that ſhould come after them. For after he had ſaid that the Spirit ſhould lead them into all truth, he preſently adds theſe words, *and he will ſhew you things to come*, ver. 13. viz. He would endue the apoſtles with the gift of prophecy. But now, I hope, all thoſe that ſucceed the apoſtles in the church, do not pretend to any ſuch

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assistance of the Spirit as that was. If the bishops of any church can shew that they have the gift of prophecy, in a continued succession, and that they can foretel things to come, as the apostles did, then we will own that this promise of Christ was directed to his church in all ages. But not till then.

Lastly, it is brought for a proof of the church's infallibility, that St. *Paul* tells *Timothy*, *that the church was the pillar and ground of the truth.* 1 Tim. iii. 15. Why, admitting that St. *Paul* said so, yet it is plain that it was not of the church, but of a church, a particular church, *viz.* that of *Ephesus* that he spoke these words. Which church of *Ephesus*, where *Timothy* was bishop, is not now in being, tho' while it was in being it was a stay and support of truth. But what doth this make to the proving, that any church at this day is infallible? But supposing we understand these words of St. *Paul* of the church catholic, as the Roman-catholics would have us, yet even this will do them no service at all. For we say in the first place, that he might stile *the church a pillar and support of truth*, not upon account that it always is so, and always shall be so; but because it ought to be so; just as our Saviour calls all his disciples, all christians, the salt of the earth, and yet in the same place tells us, that that *salt may become unsavoury*. Matt. v. 15. It is the duty of christians to *be the salt of the earth*, and of the church *to be a pillar and support of the truth*; but it doth not follow from these attributes, that either the one or the other shall always perform or make good those characters. I say, if we do give this account of the passage in St. *Paul*, there is none of them can confute us.

Again: We say in the second place, that the church may be always *a pillar and ground of the truth*, and yet be

be far from being infallible. All that St. *Paul* can be ſuppoſed to have meant by this phraſe, if he had ſpoke of the catholic church, can be no more than this, that the church of Chriſt ſhould always be the pillar and ſupport of that neceſſary truth which goes to the making up *the myſtery of godlineſs*, ver. 16. which he ſpeaks of in the very next verſe: That is to ſay, the fundamental truths of chriſtianity ſhall be always taught and profeſſed in the church, *viz.* ſo much truth as will carry the profeſſors of it to heaven, if they live up to it. But this comes infinitely ſhort of infallibility. The church may be thus *a pillar and ſupport of the truth*, and yet at the ſame time hold and teach a great many errors.

But altho' this is ſufficient to ſhew, that this text, if underſtood of the church, makes nothing for infallibility; yet I believe, any indifferent perſon that reads the words, and minds them well, will be almoſt forced to acknowledge that they are not to be underſtood of the church, but to be applied to *Timothy* himſelf, to whom the apoſtle writes; ſo as to be read thus: *Theſe things I write unto thee, hoping to come unto thee ſhortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayeſt know how to behave thyſelf in the houſe of God, the church of the living God, as a pillar and ſupport of the truth.* He is giving rules to *Timothy* how to behave himſelf in the church, which he calls the houſe of God. Now, after that he called it an houſe, one would think it not proper that he ſhould in the very ſame breath call it a pillar of an houſe. But now it is very natural to give that name to *Timothy*, and to exhort him to behave himſelf as ſuch in the houſe of God; as indeed the apoſtles and biſhops are in ſcripture, called by the name of pillars. And if you take the text in this ſenſe (as I do verily believe this is

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the meaning of it) it is ſtill farther off from the purpoſe that it is brought for.

Theſe are the chief texts in the bible that are brought in favour of the church's perpetual infallibility. But you ſee by that little I have ſaid of them, that not one of them doth near come up to the point. Nay, indeed, doth not in the leaſt touch it. And yet one would think, that ſo great a point as this, a point which as they ſay, ſo nearly concerns every man's ſalvation, ſhould not have been thus ſilently paſſed over both by our Saviour himſelf, and by thoſe inſpired men that pretend to give us an account of his doctrines.

2. But I leave this, and proceed in the ſecond place to another reaſon, why we cannot believe that Chriſt hath any infallible church upon earth, *viz.* becauſe we do not find that any of the primitive churches ever pretended to ſuch infallibility; no, not the church of Rome herſelf. We do not find that the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, much leſs of the Roman church, is aſſerted by any one antient council, or by any one antient father. We do not find, that in the controverſies which aroſe in the ancient church about matters of faith, the guides of the church ever made uſe of this argument of the church's infallibility for the quieting and ending of them; which yet, had they known of any ſuch thing, had been the propereſt and the eaſieſt means they could have uſed. Nay further we know, that the antient fathers had another method of confuting heretics and ſchiſmatics than by appealing to the church's infallibility; namely, by bringing their doctrines to be tried by the ancient uſages and doctrines of the apoſtolic churches, and eſpecially by the divine oracles of ſcripture, which they looked upon as the entire and only rule of faith.

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We know further, as to the chuch of Rome, that by what appears by the carriage and behaviour of other churches in the primitive times towards that church, in matters where they were concerned together, it muſt be thought impoſſible that thoſe churches ſhould ever have entertained any opinion, or ſo much as imagination of the Roman church's infallibility: They making no ſcruple, whenever there was occaſion, to oppoſe the ſenſe of that church as vigorouſly, as they either did or could oppoſe any other particular church that differed from them.

3. But thirdly, another reaſon why we are hardly brought to believe that any church is infallible, is, becauſe we do not ſee any effect of this infallibility in the world, or any good which hath accrued to the church, which may not as well be aſcribed to God's ordinary aſſiſtance of every chriſtian church without infallibility, as with it.

It is ſaid indeed, that without a living infallible judge, controverſies that ariſe among chriſtians cannot be ended. Why that very church that pretends to infallibility are not yet agreed among themſelves about ſeveral points pertaining to religion. Nay, this very buſineſs of infallibility (as important a point as it is) as to the ſeat of it, where, or in whom it is lodged, is yet as great a controverſy among them as any.

It is ſaid, that without an infallible judge the ſcriptures cannot be expounded; the ſenſe of texts cannot be aſcertained. Why, as to this, we deſire to be informed, what advantages that church that pretends to infallibility hath in this reſpect, above other churches that pretend to none. Do they in that communion, underſtand ſcripture better than thoſe who differ from them? Or have they ſettled or cleared the ſenſe of any

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one doubtful text, by virtue of infallibility, during all the time they have laid claim to it? It will be a hard matter to produce one text of ſcripture, the ſenſe of which was by this means aſcertained. We all know, and muſt confeſs, that all thoſe texts of ſcripture which were difficult and obſcure at the firſt, remain ſo to this day, for any thing that any infallibility hath done toward the clearing of them. And if the ſenſe of any obſcure paſſage in thoſe holy books be more cleared, or better aſcertained to us than they were formerly, next to the bleſſing of God, we are obliged for it to the learning and induſtry of fallible commentators.

Theſe are ſhrewd preſumptions, that it was not the deſign of Chriſt that we ſhould arrive to the knowledge of his will, by the conduct of an unerring guide, but rather by honeſtly and induſtriouſly employing thoſe parts, and thoſe ordinary means which he hath afforded us for that purpoſe.

I might mention another reaſon why we think it very unſafe to rely upon any church's infallibility, as to matters of faith, (and which indeed is worth all the reſt) and that is this: Becauſe it may be made to appear, that that church, which only of all others claims infallibility to herſelf, hath actually erred in her determinations about matters of faith.

In ſaying this, I ſay no more than what our church hath declared in her nineteenth article. The words of it are theſe:

"As the church of *Jeruſalem*, of *Alexandria*, and "*Antioch* have erred, ſo alſo the church of *Rome* hath "erred, not only in their living and manner of cere-"monies, but alſo in matters of faith."

But I have held you too long already to engage you in a new argument; eſpecially ſuch a one as needs no proof

proof to us, we owning ourselves protestants, and being presumed to be already satisfied about it.

And therefore I take my leave of this argument, and close all with these petitions in our liturgy:

"That it would please God to give all his people "increase of grace, to hear meekly his word, and "receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the "fruits of the Spirit.

"That it would please him to bring into the way "of truth, all such as have erred and are deceived.

"That it would please him to strengthen such as "do stand, to comfort and help the weak-hearted, "to raise up them that fall, and finally to beat down "satan under our feet.

God of his infinite mercy grant this, for the sake of his dear Son. To whom, &c.

SERMON IV.

That the ſcriptures may be underſtood in all neceſſary points by private perſons, with ordinary helps, without an infallible interpreter of their ſenſe; and therefore not to be denied to the common people.

2 PET. iii. 16.

——*In which are ſome things hard to be underſtood; which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they do alſo the other ſcriptures, unto their own deſtruction.*

ST. Peter in this chapter is treating of the ſecond coming of Chriſt to judge the world, and anſwering the objection that ſome ſcoffers in thoſe days made againſt the truth of it, upon account that it was delayed ſo long. To this he replies ſeveral things, and he backs what he had ſaid with the authority of St. Paul, who had written

written concerning these matters. Ye should *account* (says he, ver. 15.) *that the long-suffering of our Lord*, (which is objected against) *is* meant for our *salvation*; *even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you*; *as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things*, ver. 16. And now having mentioned St. Paul and his epistles, he adds this note as it were by way of parenthesis [*in which*, says he, *there are some things*, &c.]

Upon which words, before I come to treat of the main point I design from them, I shall desire leave to make a few strictures or short notes.

1. First of all it is doubted, whether the first words of my text *in which*, do refer to St. Paul's epistles, or to the things he writes of in those epistles. For the relative article is in some copies expressed in one gender ἐν αἷς, to refer to the epistles; but in most copies ἐν οἷς, to refer to the things spoken of. According to the first reading, this is the proposition in the text, *viz. That in St. Paul's epistles there are some things hard to be understood.* According to the other reading, this is the proposition, *That among those particulars that St. Peter is now insisting on, and which St. Paul likewise hath in his epistles treated of, there are some hard to be understood.* There is some difference between these propositions; but yet they are both of them certainly true: And I do not see any such matter of consequence which of them we pitch upon, as to think it worth the disputing whether of them is to be preferred.

2. There have been various conjectures what those particular points or passages are in St. Paul's epistles, which St. Peter here calls δυσνόητα, *hard to be understood*, and which he says men in his time did *wrest to their*

own deſtruction. St. Auſtin will have it, that he had his eye on St. Paul's doctrine of *juſtification by faith without works*; which ſome heretics in thoſe days perverted to very ill purpoſes. Others give other accounts; but they are all uncertain; and it is a buſineſs of greater curioſity than uſefulneſs, to be inquiſitive about this matter.

3. It is more to our purpoſe in the third place, to take notice of this: That it is not only in St. Paul's epiſtles, that there are τίνα δυσνόητα, *ſome things hard to be underſtood*, but in all the other ſcriptures likewiſe. And ſeems to be intimated here by St. Peter, when having told us how liable *unlearned and unſtable men were to wreſt ſome paſſages* in St. Paul's epiſtles to a wrong ſenſe, upon account that they were *hard to be underſtood*, he adds that they did ſo likewiſe *with other ſcriptures.*

Indeed it cannot be denied, that there are abundance of paſſages, both in the writings of the Old and New-teſtament, which are very *hard to be underſtood.* Some upon account of the depth, and myſteriouſneſs, and obſcurity of the things themſelves that are delivered; and many more, upon the account of the ſhortneſs and difficulty of the expreſſions wherein they are cloathed. But moſt upon account of our ignorance and unacquaintance with the idioms of the languages they were wrote in, and the cuſtoms, and hiſtories, and other things proper to thoſe places and perſons they were firſt intended for, which are referred to in them. So that if any man will ſay, that the whole ſcripture is plain and eaſy to be underſtood, he affirms very raſhly. There are a multitude of texts which will puzzle the moſt learned and intelligent man now living, to give a certain account of. And therefore

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eaſily may we imagine that there is a far greater multitude, which an ordinary unlearned reader will be able to ſay little or nothing to.

4. But I obſerve in the fourth place, after what manner, in all times, the ſcriptures have been dealt with. Even in the apoſtolical times there were men that *wreſted them.* The word is, στρεβλοῦσι: they did diſtort them from their natural meaning: they did torture them to make them ſpeak what ſenſe they would have them: they did not ſtudy to take up their opinions from ſcripture, but they ſtudied to force the ſcripture to comply with thoſe opinions they had taken up before. This is properly *wreſting the ſcripture*; and this practice, as it did begin very early, ſo hath it ever ſince continued in the world. In every age, and at this day as much as ever, the ſcriptures have been wreſted from their proper ſenſe and meaning to ſerve turns: Among all the numerous diviſions and factions that have been, or are in the chriſtian church, either with reference to doctrine or practice, there is not one of them but hath always urged ſcripture in its own defence. There was none of the old heretics (were their principles never ſo unſcriptural) but had abundance of texts to vouch for their orthodoxy, if they might have the liberty of interpreting them. And at this day, not only we do urge the ſcriptures for our cauſe, but papiſts, ſocinians, quakers, antinomians, and all the other diviſions among us, do all with equal confidence appeal to the ſcripture for the truth of their cauſe. Now certainly the ſcripture can have but one true ſenſe, let the pretenders to that ſenſe be as many as they pleaſe. And therefore all theſe men holding contradictions to one another, cannot all be ſuppoſed to interpret ſcripture faithfully and ſincerely: But ſome

of them do wreſt it in order to the ſerving that cauſe which they have eſpouſed.

5. But fifthly, it is worth our notice, what kind of perſons they were in the apoſtle's time, that did thus *wreſt the ſcripture*; they were, as he tells us, ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι, *unlearned and unſtable*. It may be he meant the ſame thing by both theſe words. But, if they be to be diſtinguiſhed, by the unlearned we are to underſtand the ignorant and unſkilful; they who never applied their minds to the careful reading of the ſcripture, nor have taken care to furniſh themſelves with thoſe helps and acquirements which are neceſſary to be had in order to the right underſtanding it when they read it. By the unſtable, we are to underſtand thoſe that are not well fixed and eſtabliſhed and grounded in the faith of Chriſt, (as the word ἀστήρικτοι moſt properly ſignifies) but for want of true principles, do fluctuate this way and that way, and are *toſſed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*, as St. Paul expreſſes it, Eph. iv. 14. Theſe were the unlearned and unſtable men that did, in the apoſtle's time, wreſt the ſcripture. And ſuch kind of perſons have they always been that followed this practice of theirs in ſucceeding generations. Whatever innovations or corruptions have been brought into the church, whatever departures have been made from catholic faith, and catholic charity and communion, they had generally both their riſe and continuance from ſuch unlearned and unſtable men.

That which I would gather from hence is this: How very neceſſary it is for thoſe who would rightly expound the ſcripture, both to furniſh themſelves with a competent meaſure of ſuch kind of learning, and ſkill, and knowledge, as is proper for the underſtanding of that book, and alſo to be thoroughly grounded and principled

pled in the ſubſtantial and fundamental doctrines of the chriſtian religion. If either of theſe qualities be wanting, a man is like to make ſad work if he ſets up for an interpreter of ſcripture.

6. The ſixth and laſt thing I take notice of in theſe words is, the ſad conſequence of a man's *wreſting the ſcriptures*, which is here mentioned. *They wreſt them*, ſays the apoſtle, *to their own deſtruction.* This conſideration ought to make us all infinitely careful how we abuſe or pervert the ſcripture, or make a tool of it for the ſerving our own ends. By ſuch wicked proceedings, we ſhall not only do a great miſchief to religion and the church, but undo ourſelves at the long run. It is not indeed every error and miſtake about the ſenſe of a text of ſcripture, that is of this dangerous conſequence, nor many ſuch errors and miſtakes put together. A man may be ignorant or miſtaken in a thouſand texts of ſcripture, without any danger of his ſalvation. But this is that we ſay is dangerous, when a man makes uſe of ſcripture, to countenance his vicious inclinations: As either when he ſo perverts or corrupts the chriſtian doctrine, as to give encouragement to a wicked and unchriſtian life, or ſuborns texts of ſcripture, for the making or upholding diviſions and ſchiſms in the chriſtian church. This we ſay, is ſuch a *wreſting of the ſcriptures*, as it is to be feared, thoſe that uſe it, may too truly be ſaid to do it *to their own deſtruction.*

And thus much I thought fit to ſpeak by way of explication of the text. It ſhall now be my buſineſs to reſolve the three following enquiries:

Firſt, Since the character that St. Peter gives of the ſcripture, eſpecially of St. Paul's epiſtles is, that there are in them δυσνόητα *things hard to be underſtood*;

with what truth can we proteſtants affirm, That the ſcriptures are plain and perſpicuous, and eaſily underſtood by vulgar capacities ?

Secondly, Whether from this point, that there are in ſcripture, things *hard to be underſtood*, we can reaſonably draw ſuch a concluſion as this, that therefore there is a neceſſity, that Chriſt ſhould have left in his church ſome viſible infallible judge for the interpretation them ?

Thirdly, Whether the difficulty and obſcurity of the holy ſcriptures, and their being liable on that account, to be wreſted and perverted to evil purpoſes, be a ſufficient ground for the forbidding the uſe of them to the people ? And whether for all that, every man may not, and ought not, ſeriouſly to apply himſelf to the reading of the holy ſcriptures, or the hearing them read ?

I. My firſt enquiry is, How can the proteſtants poſition be true, That the ſcriptures are plain and perſpicuous, and intelligible to ordinary capacities ; when yet, if we may believe St. Peter, there are in them things *hard to be underſtood ?*

This is a difficulty that the Roman-catholics do urge us with, in order to the making us quit the ſcriptures as our rule of faith, and take up tradition in the place thereof. But this will appear no difficulty at all, if they would but rightly repreſent our doctrine in this matter.

1. In the firſt place, we do not ſay, that every paſſage of ſcripture is plain, eaſy, and perſpicuous ; nay, we acknowledge, that there are ſeveral paſſages of it obſcure and intricate, and ſuch as will puzzle not only an ordinary reader, but even the moſt learned, to give the meaning of. So that we leave room enough for

St.

St. Peter's assertion, that there are in scripture τίνα δυσνόητα, *some things* hard to be understood. Nay, if any man will enlarge his proposition, and say, that there are *many things hard to be understood* in it, we do readily concur with them.

2. Neither secondly do we say, That those passages which are intelligible to a learned reader, to one that is well versed and experienced in these kinds of matters, are all of them easy and intelligible to an unlearned one. We acknowledge as well as they, that as a man is more or less furnished with proper helps, and means, and instruments, for the understanding the scripture; as he hath more or less improved himself, by acquired knowledge and learning; so he shall, in proportion, understand more or less of those holy books. And we do not, upon a pretence of private inspiration from the Spirit of God, teach or think, that every well-meaning godly person, is presently qualify'd to expound the scriptures.

3. But thirdly, this is all that we say, as to the plainness, and perspicuity, and intelligibleness of the scriptures, That tho' there be in them many difficult passages, nay, perhaps whole books; yet, as to all those things, wherein the salvation of mankind is concerned, they are sufficiently plain and easy to be understood, both by the learned and unlearned. So far as scripture is *a rule of faith and manners*, (and we contend that it is a perfect rule of both) so far it is perspicuous and obvious to all capacities; supposing the men come with an humble and honest mind, desirous to learn their duty, and willing to practise it after they have learnt it. We do not say, that there are no difficulties in scripture; but we say, that all those things, that are necessary to be believed or prac-

tiſed, are not difficult. Or, if ſome of them be more obſcurely expreſſed in one place, they are more plainly in another. So that none can juſtly except againſt the ſcripture, as to the fitneſs of its being *a rule of faith and manners, and very neceſſary to be read and known of all men*, upon account of the difficulty or obſcurity of it.

But as to this the Roman-catholics urge, That it is not ſo clear that the ſcripture is plain and perſpicuous, even in neceſſary points, wherein the ſalvation of men is concerned. For if it were, how comes it to paſs, that there are ſo many diſputes among the proteſtants about the ſenſe ſcripture, even in matters which they account (at leaſt one ſide of them doth account) fundamental and neceſſary? To this I anſwer; That tho' we ſhould admit this ſuggeſtion to be true, that the proteſtants differ in their interpretation, even in fundamental points, yet it is no argument againſt the plainneſs and perſpicuity of ſcripture in matters of faith and manners. For things may be plain enough to all diſintereſted men, that are not plain to thoſe who are ſtrongly prejudiced againſt thoſe things by education, or paſſion, or intereſt, and the like. If no writing be allowed to be plain, and intelligible, till all men be agreed in the ſenſe of it, or till it be impoſſible that a man, that ſets his wits at work, ſhould be able to find any colour for the wreſting it to another ſenſe than that which was meant by the author; then farewel all plainneſs and perſpicuity in any writing: Nay, not only ſo, but farewel all plainneſs in any ſpeeches, or declarations, that are made by word of mouth. So that this objection will as much diſſerve the cauſe of the church of Rome, who would have *tradition*, and the *authority of the pope* for their *rule of faith*, as it will diſſerve our

our cauſe, who pretend to be governed by the ſcriptures.

But I would aſk, Why doth any Roman prieſt, when he hath to deal with a proteſtant, and would bring him over to their communion; I ſay, why doth he endeavour to convince him, from the ſcriptures, of the erroneouſneſs of our religion, and the neceſſity of believing and practiſing as their church teacheth? Why doth he labour to prove, by texts of ſcripture, thoſe ſeveral points which they would bear us in hand are *neceſſary to be believed*, and which yet we deny, as tranſubſtantiation, for inſtance, and the ſupremacy of St. Peter, and the like? Doth not every man among them that proceeds in this way, for the convincing of proteſtants (and yet they all make uſe of this way) plainly acknowledge by this very proceeding, that all thoſe points that are neceſſary to be believed or practiſed, are ſufficiently plain in the ſcripture? And that even an unlearned man is capable of underſtanding them? For certainly, no man ever endeavour'd to prove a thing to another, but by ſomething, which he thought the perſon he would prove it to, would readily apprehend, and ſee the force and evidence of. This is therefore a conceſſion, that he doth in his own conſcience believe the ſcriptures to be ſufficiently plain, at leaſt in all neceſſary points, even to ordinary underſtandings.

II. But to proceed to our ſecond enquiry, which is, Whether from this point, that there are in ſcripture *things hard to be underſtood*, we can reaſonably draw ſuch a concluſion as this, That therefore there is a neceſſity that Chriſt ſhould have left in his church ſome viſible infallible judge, to whom all chriſtians ſhould reſort, for the interpreting ſcripture?

This

This indeed is a concluſion, which the Roman-catholics would draw from St. Peter's propoſition in my text: And for any thing I know, it is as good an argument for the infallibility of the biſhop of Rome, as any they produce. But however, let us examine what ground there is for drawing ſuch a conſequence.

1. In the firſt place, where is the force of the argument? Some texts of ſcripture are hard to be underſtood; therefore the biſhop of Rome is infallible: or therefore there muſt be ſomewhere a viſible authority, to which all chriſtians ſhould reſort, for the infallible declaration of the ſenſe of ſcripture: And ſince no man pretends to ſuch an authority, but the head of the church of Rome, therefore in him it is to be preſum'd it is lodged. But why doth it follow that, becauſe ſome ſcriptures are hard, therefore there is need of an infallible interpreter of all ſcripture? What is it that doth connect theſe two propoſitions together? If indeed *all* ſcripture had been hard to be underſtood, and not only *ſome things* in it; or if thoſe things in it that are really hard to be underſtood, had been ſo neceſſary, that a man could not go to heaven without underſtanding them; if either of theſe things had been true, there would have been ſome colour for the drawing ſuch a conſequence as this. But ſince, on the one hand, all that is neceſſary to be believed or practiſed, in order to ſalvation, is ſufficiently plain in ſcripture without ſuch an interpreter; and on the other hand, whatever is difficult in ſcripture, is not neceſſary to be underſtood: It plainly follows, there is no need of any infallible interpreter at all, becauſe we may underſtand all things needful in the ſcriptures, without ſuch an interpreter.

2. But

2. But ſecondly, if God had meant to have eſtabliſhed a ſtanding viſible infallible authority in the church for declaring the ſenſe of ſcripture, it cannot be doubted, but he would in thoſe ſcriptures have plainly told us ſomewhere or other; and not only ſo, but have given us ſuch particular accounts and deſcriptions of the perſon veſted with that authority, that all chriſtians in all ages might have known who he was, and where he lived; that ſo they might be able to make application to him at all times, as there was occaſion. But now there is not a word of this in the whole ſcripture, but a perfect ſilence, both as to the authority itſelf, and the perſon, or perſons, in whom it is lodged. So far are the ſcriptures from giving us the leaſt intimation, that the biſhops of Rome are ſet up by God, to be the infallible declarers and interpreters of the ſenſe of ſcripture to all the chriſtian world, from generation to generation, and that conſequently in all diſputes concerning the meaning of any paſſage in the Bible, we ought to have recourſe to that ſee; I ſay, ſo far are the ſcriptures from this, that it doth not in the leaſt appear from them, that God hath appointed any means at all of that kind, for the coming to the knowledge of the ſenſe of ſcripture. There is no mention of any infallible judicatory in the whole chriſtian world, erected by our Lord Jeſus for this purpoſe, and much leſs of the court of Rome being that judicatory.

If our adverſaries would convince us of either of theſe things, they muſt bring other kind of proofs than thoſe words of our Saviour, *Tu es Petrus, thou art Peter*, Matt. xvi. 18. and *Paſce oves, feed my ſheep*, John xxi. 16. and *Dabo tibi claves*, &c. *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xvi. 19.

For

For these do make no more to the business we are speaking of, than this expression, *Hic sunt duo gladii, here are two swords*, Luke xxii. 38. doth to the proving the pope's temporal jurisdiction over all christians, as well as his spiritual; or than *God's making two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*, Gen. i. 16. doth to the proving that the pope must consequently be above the emperor.

3. But thirdly, so far are we from being directed by God's word to apply ourselves to any visible judge, much less the bishop of Rome, for the understanding hard texts of scripture, that it doth propose quite another method to us for that purpose. The method which the scriptures themselves do provide, for the coming to a right knowledge and understanding of them, is plainly this, to read them carefully, to examine the things spoken of, to compare one thing with another, and to judge of all according to the analogy of faith; to use all the prudent means and helps that may further us in the knowledge of the truth, to pray to God for wisdom, to confer with one another, especially our spiritual guides, and above all things, to free ourselves from lust and passion, and all other prejudices, and prepossessions; and to come with an honest and humble mind, well disposed, both to receive the truth, and to practise it. For it is the *upright man that God will guide in judgment*, and *those that are gentle, to them will he teach his way. The secret of the Lord being with them that fear him, and to such only he hath promised to shew his covenant*, Ps. xxv. 14. 12. 9. These are the means which the Bible prescribes for the coming to the knowledge of God's word, and these are the rational proper means of attaining to

truth of any kind, and for receiving benefit by any books; but moſt all, proper for thoſe kind of truths, and thoſe kind of books, we are now ſpeaking of.

But is not this a quite different thing from giving up ourſelves intirely to the conduct and dictates of an unerring judge? Or when we are intangled in any difficulty, to have no more to do, than to aſk the opinion of him that ſits in the infallible chair, and to acquieſce in it, whatſoever it be? Theſe two ways are ſo different from one another, and indeed ſo inconſiſtent, that no man who finds the former laborious way of reading, and examining, and judging, of *proving all things*, and *trying the ſpirits*, and the like, recommended in ſcripture, will or can be eaſily convinced, that the latter ſhort expeditious way of appealing to the biſhop of Rome in all controverted caſes, was ever ſo much as thought of when the Bible was written.

Far am I, by what I have now ſaid, from endeavouring to weaken or undermine the rights of eccleſiaſtical authority. We do readily acknowledge, that every chriſtian church in the world has a right and authority to decide controverſies in religion, that do ariſe amongſt its members, and conſequently to declare the ſenſe of ſcripture concerning thoſe controverſies. And though we ſay, that every private chriſtian hath a liberty left him of examining and judging for himſelf, and which cannot, which ought not to be taken from him; yet every member, every ſubject of a church, ought to ſubmit to the church's deciſions and declarations, ſo as not to oppoſe them, not to break the communion, or the peace of the church upon account of them, unleſs in ſuch caſes, where obedience and compliance is apparently ſinful, and againſt God's laws.

But

But then, what is this to the pretences of the church of Rome? Every national church hath as full an authority in this matter, as the church of Rome. And beſides the authority which we aſcribe to every church, and to the church of Rome among others, doth not imply a power of determining controverſies infallibly, ſo as to oblige all chriſtians to receive and believe their determinations as the very oracles of God. For we ſay, that no one man, nor any ſociety of men among chriſtians, no, not a general council, is infallible, or free from poſſibility of error: But we only ſay, that every church hath power ſo far to determine differences that ariſe among its members, and to oblige them ſo far to compliance, as to be able to preſerve peace and unity and communion in itſelf.

4. In the fourth and laſt place, it is an idle thing to talk of the neceſſity of an infallible expounder of ſcripture upon this account, that ſome things in ſcripture are hard to be underſtood; was there nothing to be ſaid againſt it but only this, that tho' the Roman-catholics pretend, that there is in the church ſuch an infallible judge, and hath been always ſince Chriſt's time, and that that judge is the biſhop of Rome; yet for all that, the chriſtian world hath not for ſo many ages received any conſiderable benefit (if indeed any at all) from this infallibility, as to the clearing of difficulties or ſilencing diſputes that have been among chriſtians concerning the ſenſe of ſcripture. We do indeed heartily acknowledge, that we have received great benefit, and abundance of light for the expounding of ſeveral texts of the Bible, from the hiſtories, and doctrines, and practices of the univerſal church of Chriſt, and from the writings of the fathers, and other eccleſiaſtical authors in all ages (ſome of which writers

may perhaps have been bishops of Rome;) this I say, we readily grant and contend for. But in the mean time it is a quite different thing from a single man, or a multitude of men, interpreting scripture by a divine power and commission, and in an authoritative and infallible way: That which we say is, That as obscure anddifficult as the scriptures are in many passages, and as plenary a power as the popes have had in the clearing such obscurities, and untying such difficulties, yet the world to this day hath seen no effects of this power in that kind, hath received no benefit from it, in order to the clearing of dark texts; but all the texts that were obscure before, are so still, for any authoritative interpretation that any pope hath given them. And this alone is enough to spoil all the Romish pretences of the necessity of an infallible judge, to expound the scriptures where they are obscure. And thus much on our second enquiry upon this point.

III. I come now to the last, which is this: Whether the difficulty and obscurity that is to be met with in the scriptures, and their being liable on that account to be *wrested* and perverted by *unlearned and unstable men*, be a sufficient ground to debar the people from the use of them. This is indeed the Romish gloss upon this text. *Hereby it is very plain* (say the translators of Rhemes in their note upon this text) *that it is a very dangerous thing for such as be ignorant, and for wild-witted fellows to read the scriptures.* (Vid. Rhemish testament.) And they commend the wisdom of the council of Trent, which hath taken care to forbid the common reading of the bible, except to such particular men, as shall have express licence thereto from their ordinary. On the contrary, our doctrine is, That no lay-person that can read, ought to

be

be diſcouraged from reading the holy ſcripture, and much leſs forbidden it; but rather adviſed and perſuaded to the frequent reading of it: Only he ſhould be directed in the reading of it, and moſt ſeriouſly cautioned, that he do not turn that wholeſome food he may there meet with into poiſon, by his wicked miſuſe of it.

But let us take this matter a little into examination. *There are in the ſcriptures ſome things hard to be underſtood. Therefore* (ſay they) *the people muſt not read them.* But is this fair dealing with the people? Becauſe ſome things are hard to be underſtood, muſt they therefore be deprived of the benefit of the plain things that are there, and which are incomparably more than the hard things are? Or, becauſe there are ſome things hard to be underſtood, muſt therefore the key of knowledge be taken from them? Muſt they be debarred the means and opportunities of underſtanding as many of thoſe things as they can?

Well, but it is further ſaid, That ignorant and unſtable men, when they read the ſcriptures, are apt to wreſt them to their own deſtruction, and therefore the ſcriptures ſhould be kept from all ſuch, juſt as we keep weapons from children, for fear they ſhould hurt themſelves with them. To this I anſwer: If indeed the ſcriptures were of no more or greater uſe to laymen than edged tools are to children, and if there was the ſame danger that laymen would do miſchief to themſelves by reading the ſcriptures, as there is that children would hurt themſelves, if the uſe of knives and ſwords was permitted to them; I grant there would be ſome reaſon to conclude, that the Bible ought to be as far removed out of the people's way, as weapons

pons are out of the way of children. But there is no ſuch maatter.

1. For firſt we ſay, That every one of the people, be he never ſo ignorant, is capable of receiving great advantages and benefits by reading the ſcriptures, or hearing them read; for they are the means which God hath appointed for the *making us all wiſe unto ſalvation.* They are the inſtruments by which we come to the knowledge of the chriſtian religion.

2. Nay, there is a great deal more probability, that an ignorant man that comes with an honeſt mind to the reading or hearing of the ſcriptures, will put them to a good uſe, and learn ſome things by them, and go away better from them, than there is danger that he ſhould pervert them and go away worſe. It is true, moſt readers or hearers, when they have done all they can, will be ignorant of the meaning of many texts of ſcripture; nay, and it is very likely they will miſtake and miſconſtrue not a few: But then we ſay there is no great harm in this, either to themſelves or others. For every miſtake in the ſenſe of a text of ſcripture, is not a *wreſting of the ſcripture*, and much leſs a *wreſting it to a man's own deſtruction.* For *wreſting the ſcripture*, is interpreting the ſcripture to ſerve a man's own private turn; and *wreſting them to his own deſtruction*, is forcing them to declare in favour of ſome wicked unchriſtian doctrine that he hath eſpouſed, or ſome wicked unchriſtian practice that he lives in. So that, tho' a good man, nay, perhaps every good man is now and then miſtaken in the meaning and application of the ſcriptures, yet none but a bad man can *wreſt them*, eſpecially *wreſt them to his own deſtruction.*

3. But

3. But thirdly, how liable ſoever the ſcriptures are to miſconſtruction, and what bad uſe ſoever ſome men may make of them for the broaching of hereſies, or the making or continuing ſchiſms in the church, which are the proper inſtances and effects of *wreſting the ſcriptures*; yet all things conſidered, it is more for the good of the world, that the uſe of them ſhould be allowed to all perſons (upon account that *all* perſons are capable of receiving benefit from them, and *moſt* in all probability will) than it is for the good of the world, that the uſe of them ſhould be generally forbidden, (upon account that here and there ſome perſons do wreſt them, and abuſe them to their own miſchief, and the diſturbance of the church.) There is nothing that God hath made, or contrived, or appointed, but is capable of being abuſed; and too many there are that will and do abuſe it. But is it therefore better upon the whole, that every good creature of God ſhould be laid aſide (at leaſt as to the common uſe of it) becauſe it is thus liable to be abuſed, and ſome men here and there do miſchief to themſelves and others, by thus abuſing it? Certainly no. For by this rule of reaſoning all learning, all arts, all books in the world, as well as the Bible, and all preaching and praying in public; nay, thoſe creatures of God, which he hath made for the ſupport and delight of our very natural lives; I ſay, all theſe things upon this principle muſt be forbidden, at leaſt to the multitude and generality of mankind.

Theſe things, I think, may be ſufficient to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of the popiſh poſition which we are now ſpeaking of. But I deſign more upon this argument than barely vindicating the doctrine of our church from the popiſh exceptions; I would, if it were

were poſſible, convince you, not only of the lawfulneſs, but of the obligation that is incumbent upon all ſorts of men, moſt diligently and ſeriouſly to apply themſelves to the frequent reading of thoſe holy books.

And in order to that, I would repreſent this to your conſideration, *viz.* That this buſineſs of diligently reading the ſcriptures, is a thing recommended to us both by the ſcriptures themſelves, and by the practice and advice of the moſt ancient and moſt holy chriſtians, and by the reaſon of the thing itſelf. And whoever doth diſcourage or diſcountenance this in any one, doth act in oppoſition to all theſe.

1. Firſt of all, it is recommended to us in the ſcriptures themſelves. This may be ſufficiently gathered from the command of God, in the ſixth of Deut. ver. 4. *Hear O Iſrael*, &c. *The words which I command thee this day, ſhall be in thy heart, and thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up; and thou ſhalt bind them for a ſign upon thine hand, and they ſhall be as frontlets between thine eyes: And thou ſhalt write them upon the poſts of thine houſe, and on thy gates.* ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. By what words now could God more emphatically ſignify to his people, that it was his pleaſure, that all ſorts of men among them, unlearned as well as learned, ſhould thoroughly acquaint themſelves with the word of God, than he hath done by thoſe expreſſions? If any one ſay that this only concern'd the Jews, with reference to the law of Moſes, but ſignifies nothing to us chriſtians; I anſwer, that the reaſon of the precept will concern us as much or more than it did them. For if, when God

God delivered his law to Moſes, which was but a carnal temporary law, he did yet give ſuch a charge to the Iſraelites, that every ſoul of them ſhould continually exerciſe themſelves in reading and learning this law, and teaching it to their children; can we imagine that leſs is expected of us chriſtians, with reference to that everlaſting ſpiritual law of the goſpel, that law by which alone all men are to expect ſalvation, which our Lord Jeſus and his apoſtles firſt revealed by word of mouth, and then took care that it ſhould be conveyed down to us by the ſcriptures of the New-teſtament? No certainly, if it was their duty to read the word of God which they had; to meditate upon it, and to be ſo well verſed in it, that it ſhould be as familiar to them as the moſt ordinary things they uſed; as familiar as if it had been wrote on the doors of their houſes, or the gates of their cities; then certainly we chriſtians are under as great an obligation to acquaint ourſelves as familiarly with that word of God which we have, and which was delivered by a greater prophet than Moſes was, and which is of far greater concernment to the world.

But to come to our Saviour and his apoſtles. Did our Saviour, when he preached to the Jews, diſcourage any of them in his days from reading the ſcriptures? So far from that, that he exhorts all of them ſo to do, bidding them *ſearch the ſcriptures, for in them they expected to have eternal life; and they were they that teſtified of him.* John v. 39. And St. Paul makes it the great commendation of Timothy, that *from a child he had known the ſcriptures; which,* ſaith he, *are able to make a man wiſe unto ſalvation.* 2 Tim. iii. 39. And ſo far were the Pereans from being blamed or checked, that when St. Paul preached the chriſtian religion to them, they

they did not barely rely upon his authority, *but did daily examine the ſcriptures, and enquired whether his doctrine did agree with them or no*, (Acts xvii. 11.) that they are much applauded for it in the Acts of the apoſtles, and accounted *more noble than thoſe of Theſſalonica*, becauſe they did ſo. Nay, *the eunuch of Candace queen of the Æthiopians* (Acts viii. 27.) that read the ſcriptures (as he himſelf confeſſed) without any means of underſtanding them, yet was this his over-diligence (as it might be accounted) ſo far from being imputed to him as a fault, that God Almighty made it the means and the occaſion of his converſion to chriſtianity. For upon this his reading (tho' without knowledge) God ſent Philip to him by a miracle, who did ſo effectually expound what he read, as to make a proſelyte of him to Jeſus Chriſt before he parted from him: So ready is God to afford his aſſiſtance to all thoſe that uſe the means that he hath appointed, tho' they be under never ſuch diſadvantageous circumſtances.

It is true, in all theſe paſſages that I have quoted, the ſcriptures that are here mentioned, are meant of the ſcriptures of the Old-teſtament; and there is good reaſon for it, for in truth there were no others then extant, the ſcriptures of the New-teſtament not being then wrote; and therefore it is an idle thing to expect a precept out of the New-teſtament for the reading of the New-teſtament, when the canon of it was not yet finiſhed. But for all that, the reaſon of the texts I have named will hold as ſtrongly for our reading the New-teſtament, now that we have it, as they did for the reading of the Old at that time. Did our Saviour command the Jews to ſearch the ſcriptures of the Old-teſtament, becauſe they teſtified of him, and were the means by which they might be convinced that he

was

was the true Messiah? And will it not be a duty as much incumbent upon us to search the scriptures of the New-testament now, since they are the means that God hath appointed both for the conveying down to us the doctrine of the gospel, and the evidence of the truth of it? Were even the scriptures of the Old-testament in those days *able to make a man wise unto salvation?* And are not the scriptures of the Old and New-testament together, much more able to make us in these days wise unto salvation? Was it Timothy's commendation that *from a child he had known the writings of Moses and the prophets?* and will it be any disparagement to us grown men, that we exercise ourselves in the study of what was taught by Christ and his apostles? Lastly, was God so ready to assist a pagan even in an extraordinary way, when he conscientiously read the prophets, tho' without probability of understanding what he read? And can we think that he will deny his assistance, and blessing, and grace, to us in an ordinary way, when we read the gospel of Christ, and are in a good measure in a capacity of understanding it and receiving benefit from it?

2. But enough of this. I desire in the second place it may be considered, what the sense of the primitive and best christians was as to this matter. How did they practise and advise as to peoples reading of the scripture? Why every body that is in the least versed in the histories of those times, knows what a mighty value all the christians of the early ages set upon the Bible, above all other things. They joyfully heard it read in their publick assemblies, and they diligently read it, and studied it, and meditated upon it in their private houses. They would, several of them, have

have it read to them, even while they were taking their ordinary food. They took care not only to read it, but to get several portions of it by heart. They instructed their young children in it; and instances we have of those that both knew the scriptures and enquired into the sense of them, even from their childhood. In those days, as St. Jerom tells us, 'any one 'as he walked in the fields, might hear the plowman 'at his hallelujahs, and the labourers in the vineyards 'singing David's psalms.' And the same father tells us, 'that of those many virgins that lived with Paula '(a famous devout lady in those days) it was not al-'lowed to any of them to be ignorant of the psalms, 'or to pass over one day without learning some part 'of the scripture.' And to such a degree were the women of that time skilled in the scripture, that Julian the apostate lays it as a charge, as a matter of accusation against the christians. Lastly, such a veneration had the christians in those days for the Bible, that they esteemed and prized it above any thing in the world; and would rather part with their lives than deliver it up to the pagan officers that came to demand it of them. And whoever did deliver up their Bibles, were always accounted as apostates.

And lest any one should suspect that this diligence of theirs, in reading the scriptures, was rather an effect of the peoples forwardness to meddle with things above them, than any thing they were advised and directed to by their spiritual guides, there are sufficient proofs to the contrary. The devout people, in those days, were not more forward to read and learn the scriptures, than the bishops and guides of the church were to exhort them to it, and encourage them in it. St. Augustin thus speaks to the people, 'Think it not sufficient that ye hear the scriptures

'in the church, but also in your houses at home, either 'read them yourselves, or get some other to read to 'you.' Origen saith, 'Would to God we would all 'do as it is written, search the scriptures.' St. Chrysostom says to the people, 'I admonish you; I beg 'of you to get books. And again: Hearken to me 'ye laymen: ye men of the world. Get ye the Bible, 'that most wholesome remedy of the soul. If ye will 'do nothing else, yet at least get the New-testament, 'the gospels, St. Paul's epistles, and the Acts of the 'apostles, that they may be your continual teachers.' Lastly, so far was that father from confining the use of the Bible to men in holy orders, that he doubts not to affirm, 'that it was as necessary to be read by lay-'men, as by those who were professed monks. Nay, 'if we will believe him, much more necessary:' For these are his words, 'Ye think the reading of the holy 'scripture belongeth only unto monks, whereas in 'truth it is much more necessary for you than for them.' We see then that in those days, when christians lived much more holily and purely than (it is to be feared) they have done since, there was no check given to any man's reading the scriptures; but on the contrary all the encouragement imaginable. It was not then thought, that ignorance was the parent of devotion, or that the scriptures were too dangerous to be trusted in the hands of unlearned ordinary persons. It was not then imagined, that reading the Bible was the way to make men heretics, or schismatics, or any way refractory either against the laws of Christ, or the laws of the country where they lived. But on the contrary, they took it to be the best expedient in the world to make men good christians, and peaceful subjects, and hearty lovers one of another; and accordingly they

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did adviſe, they did exhort, they did encourage every man, as he had an opportunity to be frequent, and diligent, and ſerious, in the reading and ſtudying of this beſt of books, the deareſt pledge that we have viſible among us of the love of God, and the moſt effectual inſtrument to promote virtue and goodneſs, and univerſal chriſtian holineſs in the lives of men.

3. And very great cauſe had they thus to think of the holy ſcriptures, and thus to recommend them to the careful peruſal of every chriſtian. For in the reaſon of the thing (which is the third and laſt point we are now to ſpeak to) the holy ſcripture, above all other books in the world, do recommend themſelves to the diligent ſtudy of every man that would be a good chriſtian. Of all books in the world they cannot but be judged, of conſidering perſons, to be the fineſt, the nobleſt, and every way the moſt uſeful and profitable for all orders, and degrees, and ſexes, and ages, and conditions of chriſtians to ſpend their days in the reading and meditation of. For here, and here only, we have the meaſures of all God's wiſdom and knowledge in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jeſus, diſcovered to mankind. Here only we have the authentic declarations of God's mercy to us, and of the terms and conditions upon which we are to expect everlaſting ſalvation from him. Here it is from whence we are to fetch both the matter of our faith, and our evidence for the truth of it. Here are the fountains from whence we are to draw both the knowledge of our duty, and directions for the practiſing of it, and comfort and ſupport in and after we have practiſed it. Here are contained the invaluable promiſes that God hath made to his ſervants in Chriſt Jeſus, and the unſpeakable encouragement he hath

given to all penitent and returning ſinners. Here are thoſe affectionate invitations, thoſe pathetical and hearty perſuaſives of God to men to oblige them to love him, and to be eternally happy, that do make good men amazed and aſtoniſhed at the infinite condeſcenſions of the divine goodneſs. And here are thoſe ſtrong, thoſe powerful, I may ſay, thoſe irreſiſtible motives, to be good, to be happy, to love God, to love virtue, to love our own ſouls, that one may as much be filled with wonder and aſtoniſhment that any human creature can be ſo ſottiſh, and ſtupid, and inſenſible, as not to be vanquiſhed thereby, to become ſo holy and happy as God would have them to be. In a word, here are all things that are either needful, or uſeful, or delightful to a good man, and all things (as far as a book can have them) that may prevail with one that is not good, to become ſo.

And judge now, whether theſe things conſidered, the Bible be not a book fit to be read and ſtudied by all ſorts of perſons. Fit did I ſay? That is too little: Is it not neceſſary? Is it not an indiſpenſible duty? Doth not every man who hath opportunity, both ſin againſt God, and neglect the eternal concernment of his own ſoul, if he is remiſs and careleſs in this matter?

Let me therefore ſeriouſly exhort all of you to be diligent, to be conſtant in converſing with the holy ſcriptures. Let it be the care of your lives, and the delight of your minds to read them, to think of them, to confer about them, to let every one about you feel the effects of that love and eſteem and zeal you have for them. Teach them to your children, and your ſervants; recommend them moſt heartily to all that you have influence over; ſpeak of them always with

great reverence, and hear them read with humility and attention.

Which that we may all do, and receive the benefit of so doing, let us join in putting up our prayers to God in the words of our liturgy, being the collect for the second week in Advent, with which I conclude.

Blessed Lord who has caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning, &c.

SERMON V.

The number of the ſacraments aſcertained. Of the church. The only ſcripture notion of it. Wherein conſiſts the unity of the catholic church. Reflections thereupon.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

For by one ſpirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one ſpirit.

THE meaning of theſe words will appear to every one that will mind the argument which the apoſtle is treating of in this chapter. The point that he lays down is this, That though there be great variety of conditions and functions among chriſtians, and tho' likewiſe there was great variety of gifts and powers in thoſe days beſtowed upon men for the diſcharge of thoſe functions; yet

yet all these several sorts of christians, thus severally gifted and qualified, did but make up one society; and all the gifts and graces bestowed upon them, were wholly in order to the public and common benefit of that society.

This, I say, is the point that the apostle here endeavours to possess his readers with a sense of. And accordingly in the verse before the text, he illustrates it by such a similitude as would reach the apprehensions of the meanest person he spoke to. *As the body*, saith he, *is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ:* that is, so also is the christian church; so also is Christ and all christians. Christ is the head, and all christians throughout the world are the members: and all together do make one society; one corporation. Or, as the same apostle expresseth it in the 12th of Rom. 4, 5. *As we have many members in one body, and all the members have not one office: so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

This is St. Paul's proposition. And for the further clearing and confirming of it; he doth in the text shew, that it was the business and design of both those sacraments which our Lord appointed in his church, to unite all christians, by the means of the Spirit, to Christ Jesus, and to one another, and so to make them one body. *By one spirit*, saith he, *we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.* As if he had said: The design of our baptism is by the influence of the Spirit to incorporate all believers in one society, of what nation, or of what condition soever they be; whether Jews or

Gentiles, bondmen or freemen. They are all, by being baptized, enter'd into Chriſt's church, and made one body: they become members of Chriſt, and members one of another. This, I ſay, is done by means of that one Spirit which animates and enlivens that whole body, and gives ſtrength and nouriſhment to every part of that body. And as this is the deſign of our baptiſm, ſo it is alſo the deſign of the other ſacrament wherein we partake of the cup of the Lord; for there alſo we are made to drink into one Spirit. Our eating that bread, and drinking of that cup (he expreſſes only one of them, but he means both) I ſay, that is the means which Chriſt hath appointed for our receiving the continual influences of the Holy Spirit, by which the union that is between Chriſt and his members is preſerv'd and maintain'd.

This is as plain an account as I can give of the meaning of my text. And now if any one aſk what deſign I mean to purſue in this text, what purpoſes I would apply it to? I anſwer, That this text will ſerve to ſeveral good purpoſes, *viz.* for the clearing ſeveral points that it is fit we ſhould all be truly informed in.

I. I name theſe three: Firſt of all this text will give us good help towards the aſcertaining the true number of the chriſtian ſacraments, about which the churches are divided.

II. Secondly, This text will help us to give a plain and true account of a conſiderable article of our faith; and that is *the unity of the catholic church*, which is here aſſerted.

III. And thirdly, This text will ſhew us the way that was uſed in the primitive church, as to the peoples receiving the ſacrament, *viz.* that they did not only partake of the bread, but of the cup too. The ſacra-

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ment was adminiſtred in both kinds to all the faithful. For St. Paul here ſpeaking of this ſacrament, calls it *a drinking into one ſpirit*. As elſewhere in the ſcripture, the Lord's ſupper is expreſſed *by breaking of bread*, without naming the diſtribution of the cup, (from whence ſome would form an argument, that the faithful did then only receive the bread) ſo in this text the ſame Lord's ſupper is expreſſed by *drinking of the cup*, without naming the giving of the bread. From whence we may certainly draw this concluſion, That the one was as neceſſary to the people as the other. And they may as well ſay, that where the cup is only mentioned, there was no bread broken; as they can ſay, that where the bread is only mentioned, there was no cup given: and conſequently wherever it happens in any text, that for ſhortneſs ſake (or for ſome alluſion that ſuited better with the ſcope of the writer) one kind or ſpecies of the ſacrament only is expreſly mentioned, yet the whole ſacrament, in both the kinds of it, is, in all thoſe texts, to be underſtood.

I begin with the firſt of theſe points:

1. This text doth fairly inſinuate to us the true number of the chriſtian ſacraments.

It is plain, that the apoſtle in this text doth expreſly ſpeak of the chriſtian ſacraments: and it is as plain, that two ſacraments, and no more than two, doth he here mention. And theſe two are the two ſacraments which the church of England, with all primitive antiquity, doth own for the only ſacraments of Chriſt's inſtitution, *viz.* Baptiſm, and the Supper of the Lord. Theſe two now, it is certain and evident that they are ſacraments, truly and properly ſo called; that is to ſay, they are outward ſigns and pledges of an inward grace that goes along with them, and they were

inſtituted by our Lord Jeſus in the moſt expreſs terms that can be; and by the very words of the inſtitution it appears, that they were deſigned to be of perpetual obligation even to the world's end. But as for other ſacraments, or more ſacraments than theſe, there is a deep ſilence both in this text, and throughout the whole New-teſtament. And yet the council of Trent, which is the rule of the Roman church, hath, beſides thoſe two, made five more; and ſo ſtrictly hath that council obliged all of that communion to receive and own ſeven ſacraments, that it hath pronounced "a "curſe againſt all thoſe who ſhall affirm that there are "either more or fewer ſacraments inſtituted by Chriſt "than ſeven, or who ſhall affirm that any one of thoſe "ſeven are not truly and properly ſacraments."

This we muſt needs think is a very hard and ſevere impoſition upon the faith of chriſtians; eſpecially, when we can ſhew, that ſome of thoſe ſeven cannot, in the nature of things, be true and proper ſacraments: and beſides, when we do confidently challenge any man of that communion to produce any one council, any one father, nay any one ſingle writer for eleven hundred years after Chriſt, that ſaid or taught there were juſt ſeven ſacraments, and neither more nor fewer, of Chriſt's inſtitution. Peter Lombard, by all that we can find, (who lived in the 12th century, and was the father of the ſchoolmen) was the firſt who aſſerted this preciſe number. But can the bare opinion of ſuch a man, at ſuch a diſtance from the primitive church, be of authority enough to ground an article of faith upon, nay, and to make it damnable for any man to believe otherwiſe?

But I know it will be ſaid, That the ancient fathers do give the name of ſacraments to marriage, to orders,

to penance, and to all thoſe other things which are now by the church eſtabliſhed for ſacraments of Chriſt's appointment. Why, be it ſo; yet this doth not come home to the buſineſs. For if they will pretend to make a true and proper ſacrament of every thing that ſome fathers have applied the name of ſacrament to, they may with as much reaſon make ſeven and twenty ſacraments as ſeven. At this rate they muſt make faſting, and praying, and weeping, and waſhing the diſciples feet, and croſſing of themſelves, and vowing virginity, and many other ſuch things; I ſay, they muſt make all theſe to be ſacraments, as well as the five they have been pleas'd to obtrude upon us; becauſe indeed every one of thoſe things is by ſome father or other called by the name of a ſacrament. Nay, the ſcripture is a ſacrament, and the whole religion of Chriſt is a ſacrament, in the language of ſome of the fathers. But now for ſacraments truly ſo called, and in that notion in which both they and we do underſtand the word, namely, for ſuch outward viſible ſigns, or ſymbols, or elements as were appointed by Jeſus Chriſt, for the conveying ſpiritual grace to all that did worthily partake of them: I ſay, in this notion of ſacraments, it will be hard to find more, either in ſcripture or in the fathers, than thoſe two we are all agreed upon, Baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. St. Cyprian, I dare ſay, thought of no more, when he tells us, "That then men may be thoroughly ſanctified, and become the children of God (*ſi utroque ſacramento naſcantur*) if they be regenerated by both the ſacraments." If he had believed more ſacraments than two, it is impoſſible he ſhould have expreſſed himſelf in this manner. St. Auſtin likewiſe hath a memorable paſſage to this purpoſe: "Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſays he, hath knit

chriſtians

chriſtians together with ſacraments (which is exactly the ſame thing that is here ſaid in the text) which ſacraments, ſaith he, are moſt few in number, moſt eaſy to be obſerved, moſt excellent in ſignification, and theſe are Baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper." And in another place he tells us, "*Hæc ſunt eccleſiæ genuina ſacramenta.* Theſe are the two ſacraments of the church." But if after all this, the church of Rome will, without the authority of the ſcriptures, without the ſuffrage of any one ſingle author for above a thouſand years together, nay againſt the reaſon of the thing, and againſt the ſenſe of the primitive fathers, make it an article of faith, and neceſſary to ſalvation, that every chriſtian ſhould believe that Chriſt ordained ſeven true and proper ſacraments of perpetual uſe in the church, and all conferring grace to the worthy receivers of them; whereas, by all that appears, he ordained but two of this nature; who can help it? This only we muſt needs ſay, that ſhe aſſumes a vaſt authority over mens conſcience. But whether it be reaſonable without better evidence, to ſubmit our judgments and conſciences to that authority, let indifferent perſons judge.

2. But I have ſpoke enough of this point. Let us again look over the text, and take up ſome other. *We are all,* ſays the apoſtle, *baptized into one body, and made to drink into one ſpirit.* From theſe words this now may be obſerved in the ſecond place:

We have here a plain declaration and aſſertion of an article which we profeſs to believe in our creed, and that is the unity of the church. In the creed which we repeat every day, we own the belief of the catholic church. And in the creed which we repeat on Sundays and holidays, we do more explicitly declare the

the oneneſs of that church, in theſe terms, *I do believe in one catholic and apoſtolic church.* If now we took no other guide but the holy ſcriptures for the meaning of this article, it would appear as plain a buſineſs as any in the whole Bible. But as the different intereſts of men have been concern'd in the interpretation of it, it is become an intricate thing, a bone of contention, a fountain of I know not how many controverſies. But the reaſon hereof is very evident. Men, through their over-great love of themſelves, and favour to their own party, have no mind to let the church of Chriſt lie in common, as without doubt our Saviour intended it, but every one will be engroſſing the whole church to themſelves, and to thoſe of their communion. And this hath put their wits upon the rack oftentimes for the deviſing and inventing God knows how many marks and tokens whereby to diſtinguiſh the true church from falſe and pretended churches: though yet it is evident enough to any byſtander, that the marks they give of the true church, are rather contrived to ſuit with the quality and genius of that church they appear for, and whoſe cauſe they would ſerve, than taken from the holy ſcripture, or collected by the meaſures of right reaſon.

But let us ſee what account the holy ſcriptures, and eſpecially the ſcripture of my text give of this church, this one church, about which ſo much noiſe is made.

It is plain from the holy ſcripture, that it was the deſign of our Lord Jeſus to deliver to mankind the whole will of God, ſo far as their ſalvation was concerned in it: to reveal to them all that was needful, either to be believed or practiſed, in order to their future happineſs. All theſe things thus delivered and revealed by him, we call the chriſtian religion: and this

religion

religion was taught to the world partly by himself, and partly by his apostles; and this religion was put into writing by inspired men, and is now extant among us in the books of holy scripture. Furthermore it was our Lord's design, that all who should embrace this religion of his, should be united among themselves and with their head Christ Jesus, and so become one body by the means of one Holy Spirit which should actuate and influence them; and this is that which the apostle saith, *There is one body*, and *one spirit*. They are therefore one body, because they are all acted and enliven'd by the same Spirit, derived from the head Christ Jesus. And further, in the last place, it was our Lord's intention and design, that all believers, all that professed his religion, should be admitted to the participation of this Spirit, and so be made members of this common body, by the sacrament of baptism: and likewise that they should be continued and maintained in this membership, and receive continual influence from that same Spirit by eating and drinking in the sacrament of the communion. And this is that which is told us in the text, that *we are all by one spirit baptized into one body, and made to drink into one spirit*.

Taking now these things along in our minds, we may easily form a true notion of the church: that notion I am confident which the scripture meant to give us of it, when it speaks of the church as one. The church, according to these principles, can be nothing else but the whole multitude of those persons, whether Jews or Gentiles, that do embrace and profess the christian religion, and are joined together by the means of the sacraments in one body or society under one head Christ Jesus. This, I say, is the general notion of the church. But it will not be amiss, if I treat of this

this matter a little more particularly, that every body may fully underſtand the nature of that church which we all profeſs to believe, but yet are ſo much divided about. And I am confident we ſhall find enough in the holy ſcripture to ſatisfy all our ſcruples about this buſineſs.

The firſt time that our Saviour makes mention of his church, was before he had actually any church in the world; for he ſpeaks of it as a thing future. It was upon St. Peter's public confeſſion of him to be the Chriſt, the Son of God. Upon this, ſays our Saviour, *Verily I ſay unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*, Matt. xvi. 18. Afterwards, when he was leaving the world, and aſcending up into heaven, he gives particular orders to his apoſtles about the building of this church which he had promis'd. And this was the commiſſion he gave them, *Go*, ſays he, *and make diſciples of all nations, baptiſing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; and teaching them to obſerve whatever I have commanded you. And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

This commiſſion of our Saviour we may properly enough ſtile the charter of the church; and mind, I pray, what is contained in it. Our Saviour here declares the extent of his church, and of what perſons he would have it conſtituted. It was to extend throughout all the world, and to be made up of all nations. He here declares by whom he would have it built and conſtituted, *viz.* the apoſtles. He here declares upon what grounds he would have it conſtituted, or upon what conditions any perſon was to be received into it, *viz.* their becoming the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, and

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undertaking to obſerve all that he had commanded. He here likewiſe declares the form or the method by which perſons were to be admitted into this church, and that was by being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: and laſtly, he here promiſes the perpetual preſence of his Holy Spirit, both to aſſiſt the apoſtles and their ſucceſſors in the building and governing this church, and to actuate and enliven all the members of it.

Well then, Chriſt before he left the world, promiſed that a church ſhould be built, and he gave a commiſſion for the building of it. Let us now ſee how this promiſe was fulfilled, how this commiſſion was executed, and how this church was actually built and conſtituted.

Now as to this, we find in the ſecond chapter of the Acts, that in purſuance of a commiſſion given to the apoſtles, they, with the reſt of the diſciples, met together at Jeruſalem on the day of Pentecoſt, and then and there did the Holy Spirit (as Chriſt had promiſed, ver. 1.) deſcend upon the apoſtles, and endued them with the power of ſpeaking all languages, that ſo they might be enabled to execute their commiſſion of preaching to all nations; and then and there did St. Peter, ver. 6. (to whom Chriſt had promiſed the honour of laying the foundation of this church for his ſo generous a confeſſion of him;) then, I ſay, did St. Peter, (ver. 14.) begin to preach the religion of Jeſus Chriſt to the Jews, (as we find he afterwards did to the Gentiles, Acts x.) exhorting them to repent and to embrace the chriſtian faith, and *to be baptized, every one of them in the name of the Lord Jeſus, for the remiſſion of their ſins*, ver. 38. And the event of this ſermon was, that they *who gladly received his words were baptized, and the ſame day there were added unto them*

them about three thousand souls, ver. 41. The same chapter further tells us, That these being all added to the number of the disciples, *continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer*, ver. 42. And then it follows, That *the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved*, ver. 47.

Here is the first time that we have mention in the New-testament of a church actually built and constituted; and we see plainly, That that church was constituted by such officers, of such members, and with such rites and ceremonies, as Christ had ordered in his general charter before spoken of. All those persons, of what different language or condition soever, that upon the apostle's preaching, did embrace the christian religion, and were baptized; I say, all those, together with the apostles who preached and administred to them, made up one church. And they exercised this church member-ship by an outward profession of the christian religion (which is there called the apostle's doctrine) and by joining with the apostles in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, (which is there called *breaking of bread*) and in public prayers. And to this church thus constituted were daily added others, till in process of time this church, thus inconsiderable at first, grew to that bulk and those dimensions which we see it hath at this day.

It is true, the first apostolical church was not then stiled by the name of catholic or universal church; (I say catholic or universal, for both these words mean the same thing, the difference only being, that the one word is Greek, and the other Latin) but it was simply called the church, or the church of God, without any other epithet. And there was good reason for this.

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For this church, as you see, was at that time confined only within the walls of Jerusalem, and for some time after within the nation of the Jews: but afterwards, when this church increased so that many cities and many nations were incorporated into it, each of which were properly churches of Christ, then, in contradistinction to those particular churches, came up the stile and the title of the catholic or universal church. So that whenever we name or speak of the catholic church, we mean by that word, the whole multitude of christians throughout the world, that are embodied into one society under their head Christ Jesus, by baptism, and the profession of the christian faith, and the participation of the common means of salvation. But when we speak of a church of any single denomination, as the Greek church, the Ethiopic church, the Roman church, the church of England, and the like, we mean only some particular church which is but a part of the church catholic or universal. The catholic church is but one, and can be but one; because all the christians in the world belong to it: and that is the church which we profess to believe in our creeds. But particular churches are many, as many as the nations are that own and profess the christian religion: nay, as many as are the dioceses into which christian people are distributed under their several bishops. But yet all these churches, whether they be diocesan, or provincial, or national, they are all parts of the universal church, just as our several limbs and members are parts of our body.

Thus I am sure I have given you the true notion of the church which the scripture always intends, when it mentions the church in general; when it speaks of the *church as the body of Christ*; when it speaks of *the church*

urch which Chriſt purchaſed with his blood; when it eaks of *the church into which we are baptized*; when ſpeaks of *the church to which all thoſe glorious proiſes are made of the forgiveneſs of ſins, of the perpetual reſence and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit*; *of the gates hell never prevailing againſt it, and of everlaſting ſalation in the world to come.* I ſay, that church is alays meant of the whole company of chriſtians diſerſed over all the world, that profeſs the common faith though perhaps none of them without mixture of erors) and enjoy the adminiſtration of the word and ſaraments under their lawful paſtors and governors: ll theſe people, wherever they live, or by what name oever they call themſelves, make up together that one ody of Chriſt which we call the catholic church.

And thus having, as I hope, done ſomething towards he fixing and ſettling the notion of the church (ſo far s our text is concerned in it) my next work is (before diſmiſs this head) to make ſome reflections and remarks upon what has been ſaid, with reference to ſeveral points which we have occaſion given every day to hear of and to think of; and which it highly concerns us very well to ſatisfy ourſelves about. The points which I think moſt natural, and at this time moſt needful to be treated of, with reference to this argument of the catholic church, are theſe that follow; which I chuſe to propoſe rather by way of enquiry, than by way of dogmatical aſſertion, that we may be the more fairly led to a juſt and equal diſcuſſion and examination of them.

And the firſt enquiry ſhall be this, Whether upon a true ſtating of the notion of the catholic church (as I have endeavour'd now to do it) that queſtion which the Romaniſts inſiſt ſo much upon when they tamper with our people, and upon which they lay the main ſtreſs of

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their cauſe, *viz.* In which part of the world, or in which of the different communions of Chriſtendom the only true church of Chriſt is to be found? I ſay, whether this queſtion of theirs be not quite out of doors? Whether it be not a very uſeleſs impertinent queſtion, as being grounded upon a falſe notion of the catholic church? A notion which is not only repugnant to the ſcriptures, but abſurd in itſelf.

If they would draw all the matters in diſpute between us into one point, and that point ſhould be with relation to the church, the queſtion upon which we were to join iſſue ſhould not be put thus, Which of all the pretended churches is the true church? or, Which of all the divided communions of Chriſtendom, is that communion in which only we may have ſalvation? (for there are many true churches, and many communions in which ſalvation may be had:) but this; Which of all the ſeveral churches that are in the world, is the moſt pure and orthodox? or, which of all the ſeveral communions in Chriſtendom is moſt agreeable to the laws of Chriſt, and in which a man may moſt ſafely, and with the leaſt hazard, venture his ſalvation? Now if the queſtion be thus put, we will join iſſue with them whenſoever they pleaſe. But I forget, I am not now anſwering of queſtions, but propoſing them.

In the ſecond place, my next enquiry upon this argument ſhould be this: Since they as well as we do allow, that baptiſm doth admit men into the catholic church, whether they be not obliged, upon their own principles (owning our baptiſm to be valid, as they all do) to acknowledge us of the church of England to be true members of the catholic church?

My third enquiry ſhall be this: Whether, by all the marks and tokens that are given of the church in the

he holy ſcriptures, the church of England may not be proved to be both a true and a ſound part of the catholic church?

My fourth enquiry ſhall be this: Whether our charity to the church of Rome, in owning them to be a true church, whilſt they are ſo uncharitable to deny us to be ſo, be any good argument that their communion is ſafer than ours?

My fifth enquiry ſhall be this: Whether there be any colour of reaſon, that the church of Rome, and they who adhere to her communion, ſhould engroſs to themſelves the name of the catholic church, or that they who are out of her communion ſhould be thought no catholics?

My ſixth enquiry ſhall be this: Allowing, as we do, churches of different communions to be parts of the catholic church, and allowing chriſtians in thoſe ſeveral churches to be capable of ſalvation, Whether it can juſtly from thence be infer'd, that it is an indifferent matter, as to a man's ſalvation, what church or what communion he is of, ſo long as he is but of any one? and, Whether every one is not bound, upon pain of damnation, to adhere to that church, which he is convinced is moſt agreeable to the word of God; and to forbear communion with that church in which he cannot communicate without either profeſſing to believe ſome things which he cannot believe, or practiſing ſome things which he is convinced God's laws have forbidden him?

Theſe are all uſeful enquiries: and I ſhall hereafter, as I have opportunity, endeavour to give as plain an anſwer to them as I can.

In the mean time, conſider what ye have heard, &c.

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SERMON VI.

A discussion of the question which the Roman Catholics much insist upon with the Protestants, *viz.* In which of the different communions in Christendom, the only true church of Christ is to be found?

With a refutation of a certain Popish argument handed about in *M. S.* in 1686.

The 2d sermon upon the following Text.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit.

THE plain meaning of these words is (as I told you) this: the design of our baptism is, thro' the influence of the Spirit which is then given, to incorporate all believers in one society, of what nation or condition soever they be.

e. They are all, by their being baptized, enter'd nto Chriſt's church, and made one body. They be- come the members of Chriſt, and members one of an- other. And this, I ſay, is done by means of that one Spirit, which animates and enlivens that whole body, nd gives ſtrength and nouriſhment to every part of it.

And as this is the deſign of our baptiſm, ſo it is alſo he deſign of the other ſacrament, wherein we partake of the cup of the Lord; for there alſo we *are made to drink into one ſpirit*. Our eating of that bread and drinking of that cup, (he expreſſes only one of them, but he includes both) I ſay, that is the means which Chriſt hath appointed for our receiving the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, by which the union which is between Chriſt and his members is preſerv'd and maintain'd.

Three points I told you this text did fairly lead us to diſcourſe upon. *Firſt*, The number of the chri- ſtian ſacraments, which ſeems here to be adjuſted and aſcertained; and they are Baptiſm and the Lord's ſup- per. Both theſe are here expreſsly mentioned; but no other, neither in this text nor in any other paſſage in the New-teſtament; nor do we find that the ancient fa- thers thought of any more; nor doth it appear that any writer of the church, for eleven hundred years to- gether, did ever give that preciſe number of the ſacra- ments which the church of Rome now doth.

The ſecond point to be inſiſted on from this text, is the unity of the catholic church into which we are baptized.

And the third point, the right that the laity have by Chriſt's inſtitution, and the apoſtle's practice, to the cup of the communion; ſince it is plain by this text,

text, that all the faithful did, in the apoſtles times, drink into one ſpirit, as well as eat into one ſpirit.

The two former of theſe points I treated upon the laſt Lord's-day: and as for the firſt of them, I ſhall not repeat any thing of what I then ſaid; but as for the ſecond, becauſe I have not yet done with it, it is neceſſary that I give you ſome general account of the notion of the church and its unity, which I then endeavoured to eſtabliſh; that ſo you may the better go along with me, as to thoſe points wherein I ſhall be concern'd at this time.

The ſum of what I ſaid concerning the church and its unity, was this: That whenever we name or ſpeak of the catholic church, (if we will take the ſcripture notion) we muſt mean by that word, the whole multitude of chriſtians throughout the world that are imbodied into one ſociety by baptiſm, and the profeſſion of the chriſtian faith, and the participation of the common means of ſalvation. But when we ſpeak of a church of any ſingle denomination, as the Greek church, the Ethiopic church, the Roman church, the Engliſh church, or the like, we mean only ſome particular church, which is but a part of the church catholic or univerſal. The catholic church is but one, and can be but one; becauſe all the chriſtians in the world do belong to it. But particular churches are many, as many as the nations are that own and profeſs the chriſtian religion; nay, as many as are the dioceſes into which chriſtian people are diſtributed under one biſhop. But yet all theſe churches, whether they be dioceſan, or provincial, or national, or patriarchal, they are all parts of the catholic church, juſt as our ſeveral limbs and members are parts of our body; and taken

taken all together, they do make up that ſociety which we are baptized into.

This I largely proved to be the true notion of the church which the ſcripture always ſpeaks of, when it mentions the church in general; when it ſpeaks of the church as of the *body of Chriſt*; when it ſpeaks of the church *which Chriſt purchaſed with his blood*; when it ſpeaks of the church to which all thoſe glorious promiſes are made of the perpetual *preſence and aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, and of the gates of hell never prevailing againſt it.* I ſay, that church is always meant of the whole company of chriſtians diſperſed over all the world, who profeſs the common faith (though perhaps none of them without mixtures of error) and enjoy the adminiſtration of the word and ſacraments under their lawful paſtors and governors. All theſe people wherever they live, or by what name ſoever they ſtile themſelves, whether the church of Egypt, or Ethiopia; whether of the eaſtern or weſtern communion; whether churches unreformed or churches of the reformation; all theſe ſingly and ſeparately taken, are but parts of the catholic church; but taken all together (as none of them are to be excluded) they do make up that one body, which the apoſtle in my text ſpeaks of, when he ſaith, *we are all by one ſpirit baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into one ſpirit.*

And now before I diſmiſs this argument, my deſign is to make ſome reflections upon, or to draw ſome inferences from what has been ſaid concerning the church, with reference to ſome points that are debated hotly between us and the church of Rome.

And the firſt thing I ſhall inſiſt upon is this: We may, from what has been ſaid, be able, not only to

give an anſwer to that queſtion which the papiſts have continually in their mouths when they tamper with our people, *viz.* Where that church is which we profeſs to believe in our creed, but alſo to diſcern how utterly impertinent that queſtion is to their purpoſe, notwithſtanding the great ſtreſs they lay upon it.

The uſual method, when they would ſeduce any from our church is this: They will tell you, that Chriſt can have but one church here upon earth. If you acknowledge this, as you certainly muſt, they will tell you that you need not trouble yourſelf with entring into that ocean of particular diſputes which are between the proteſtants and them, when the main, and, in truth, the only queſtion is, where that church is which we profeſs to believe in the two creeds? You declare there to believe one catholic and apoſtolic church: and you own likewiſe, that out of that church there is no ordinary means of ſalvation. What need now have you to trouble yourſelf about any more, than merely to ſatisfy yourſelf in which of the communions of Chriſtendom this church is to be found, and having found it to join yourſelf to it.

I muſt needs ſay, that the waving all other diſputes, and putting the controverſy upon this iſſue, is a very compendious way, and will ſave you a world of trouble, which otherwiſe you muſt neceſſarily undergo in common methods of enquiring into, and coming to the knowledge of the truth. For if you can but ſatisfy yourſelf, as they would have you, about the true church (which is their church) they will take care to ſatisfy you about all other things whether you will or no. For after this diſpute is over, you are not permitted to diſpute any more, becauſe having found the true church, you have found an infallible one, and if the church be infallible,

infallible, you must be concluded by her determinations in all matters whatsoever.

Well, but let us examine what great weight and moment there is in this question, that the being satisfied about it should put an end to all other particular disputes. Methinks this question is just such another question as this. Since there is but one city of London, but abundance of streets, and lanes, and alleys in it, some of which are well built, others ruinous and ready to tumble; some are healthful and free from contagious distempers, others perhaps are visited with the plague; now in which of all these streets, lanes, and alleys, is the true city of London to be found? Why sure any man in his wits will think this an idle question. For whatever difference there is as to those particular places, upon account of some of them being much more safe than others, and some of them more convenient or more uniform than others, yet they are all of them parts of the same city, but none of them, singly taken, is that city. Now just such an answer as this is to be given to the question before us. The question is, where that church is to be found which we profess to believe in our creeds? To this question we give a plain answer from the principles we have before laid down. That church which we believe in our creeds is the catholic or universal church of Christ, into which all christians are baptized: and therefore being thus catholic or universal, it is not to be confined to England, or to the reformation abroad; it is not to be confined to Rome or those of her communion; it is not to be confined to Greece, to Syria, to Armenia, to the East-Indies, to Ethiopia, to Egypt; but it is in all these places, because in all these places there are christians professing the common faith of Christ, and

partaking of the ſame common ſacraments under their lawful paſtors and governors; tho' yet, in communion, many of them are divided one from another. So that in all theſe places, and in every place under heaven, where there are ſuch people, there is a true church of Chriſt, but not the whole church of Chriſt, becauſe the whole church which we call the catholic church is made up of all thoſe churches. Only this it is fit we ſhould take notice of, that tho' in all theſe places the church is to be found, yet the church, or that part of the church which is found in ſome of thoſe places, is far more pure, and holy, and apoſtolical than it is in other places. And in all the countries where the church may be ſaid to be, thoſe where the faith is profeſſed according to the church of Rome have the greateſt mixture of errors and corruptions.

And now let any man judge, whether there be any ſuch extraordinary feats to be done by this queſtion, as they would bear us in hand; nay, whether it be not wholly impertinent to our buſineſs. For you ſee that, notwithſtanding this queſtion is anſwered, yet all the particular diſputes between us and the church of Rome are yet unſettled; and we are at as great a diſtance from them as ever. Notwithſtanding we are willing to own them to be truly a church, (as we do all the eaſtern and weſtern churches,) yet ſtill we dare not communicate with them; ſtill our complaints remain againſt their uſurpations, againſt their impoſing God knows how many new doctrines for articles of faith, which the ſcriptures and the primitive church never taught; againſt their worſhip of images, and invocation of ſaints, of having the public ſervice of God in an unknown tongue, and depriving the people of half of the ſacrament, and other ſuch things. We

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ſay they are truly a church, that is, a part of the catholic church, becauſe we think they retain all the fundamentals of the chriſtian religion, both as to doctrine, and ſacraments, and government. But yet we cannot be of their communion, unleſs they will either withdraw their unlawful unſcriptural impoſitions from being terms of their communion, or ſatisfy us (which they never can do any intelligent man) that theſe new things which they impoſe and we except againſt, are are really agreeable to the word of God. So that you ſee the ocean of diſputes muſt be ſailed thro', or elſe we can never come to an harbour.

But it will perhaps be inſiſted on, as I know it is by the pretended catholics; How is it poſſible that there ſhould be but one church (as there is but one, by the acknowledgment of all) and yet ſo many different communions among thoſe that pretend to be of that church? Can all theſe people, thus divided and ſeparated, belong to that one body of Chriſt? No certainly it is but one of all thoſe communions that can be the true church?

To this I anſwer, It were heartily to be wiſhed, that all who profeſs the chriſtian religion were of one communion, as they were at firſt. And ſure I am, it is the duty of every particular man, and of every particular church, to endeavour it, as much as it is poſſible, without violating faith, and a good conſcience. And woe be to them who have been the cauſe or the occaſion of ſuch diſmal rents and ſchiſms as are to be ſeen at this day in the chriſtian world! But yet notwithſtanding, there is no reaſon to be aſſigned why churches of different communions may not for all that, remain truly parts of the catholic church, ſo long as they have thoſe eſſentials of a church which

I have ſo often named. I grant indeed, that ſo long as theſe diviſions and ſeparations do remain, there is a criminal ſchiſm lies at the door of ſome party or other: For certainly by Chriſt's laws, the whole catholic church ſhould be of one communion; and eccleſiaſtical affairs ſhould be ſo adminiſtred among all people and languages, that every honeſt man, when he had occaſion to travel from one country into another, even to the remoteſt parts of Chriſtendom, might readily, with a good conſcience, join in publick prayers and ſacraments with that chriſtian congregation which he found upon the place. So that as the ſtate of Chriſtendom now ſtands, we muſt needs acknowledge there is an horrible ſchiſm, and hath been for many ages among the churches; nay, perhaps there may be more churches than one that are guilty of this ſchiſm in ſome degree or other. But ſtill, I ſay, theſe ſchiſmatical churches are yet parts of the catholic church, tho' very corrupt and degenerate ones; their ſchiſm doth no more cut them off from being members of Chriſt's kingdom (ſo long as they hold to the foundation) than, for inſtance, if it ſhould happen in England, that two families, or two pariſhes, or two counties ſhould quarrel among themſelves, and that quarrel ſhould proceed ſo far as that they ſhould refuſe all mutual commerce and intercourſe, ſhould be inhoſpitable one towards another, and break the king's peace whenever they met one with another; I ſay, the ſchiſm in the former caſe will no more cut off the churches concerned, from being members of Chriſt's kingdom, ſo long as they retain the faith and worſhip of Chriſt Jeſus, than the quarrel or breach of peace in the latter caſe will cut of thoſe people from being the king of England's ſubjects, or from being mem-

members of his kingdom, so long as they profess to bear faith and true allegiance to his majesty, and own his laws and government.

It is a plain case that there were separations and schisms, and different communions even in the most primitive times of christianity: Witness that great schism that happened in the church of Corinth, which occasioned two famous epistles, one from St. Paul, another from St. Clement to that church. But yet, not a word in either of these epistles, that the schismatics were no christians, or out of the pale of the church.

Within two hundred years after Christ, there arose a notorious schism between the eastern and the Latin churches, about the time of celebrating Easter. And there the pope of Rome (as they have always been ready at such turns) excommunicated the churches of Asia for disagreeing with them about that point. Here now the catholic church was divided into two communions; but will any man in his wits say, that either of those communions was cut off from the catholic church, when at that time there was in both of them so many glorious martyrs and confessors? But if either of them did forfeit their title of being catholics, it will be easily guessed which of them it was. For certainly the Asiatic churches were in no fault, since they did but observe their ancient usage. But it was the Roman church that was the schismatic, in so groundlesly excommunicating them.

But then I have this further to add upon this point, that though, as you see we do assert that churches of different communions may, for all that, belong to the true catholic church, yet it is not for the serving our own cause that we do assert this. The church of

England doth not need this hypotheſis for the juſtifying herſelf to all the world; but we take this hypotheſis, and ſay all this, out of the great charity and tenderneſs we have to the church of Rome, and thoſe other great bodies that differ both from them and us, though much more from them, than they do from us. But if indeed it ſhould prove true, which the pretended catholics of Rome ſo much contend for, *viz.* That among all the different communions in Chriſtendom, there can but one of thoſe communions be the true church, and all the reſt are out of the catholic church; I ſay if this ſhould be true, I declare, that if I had yet my communion to chuſe, of all the communions in Chriſtendom, which have the face of a church, the communion of the church of Rome, as it is now eſtabliſhed, ſhould be the laſt that I ſhould join myſelf to: And my reaſon is, that if either hereſy or ſchiſm deſtroy a church, and cut off the members of it from the body of Chriſt, I ſhould more ſuſpect that communion upon both theſe accounts, than any other. As for hereſy, the notion of it is not ſo fully agreed upon. But if it be hereſy to teach doctrines of religion that are not true, and practices in religion that are not ſafe (to give it the moſt favourable term we can;) if it be hereſy to declare new articles of faith as neceſſary to ſalvation, which neither Chriſt, nor his apoſtles, nor the primitive church ever declared as ſuch; then I fear the Roman church hath gone as far towards the making herſelf guilty of hereſy, as any of the ſeveral communions of Chriſtendom, even the moſt erroneous of them. But as for ſchiſm, ſhe hath gone a great way further. We are all agreed, that ſchiſm is an unneceſſary cauſeleſs ſeparation from a church, with which we were bound to communicate. Taking

ing it now for granted, that all the churches in the world are bound to be of one communion, yet if ſeparations do happen, (as God knows there are abundance) that church only is guilty of ſchiſm, which is the cauſe and occaſion of that ſeparation. If we deſire to communicate with all churches upon the goſpel-terms, but ſome churches will not let us communicate with them upon thoſe terms, but impoſe other terms which the laws of the goſpel doth not allow; here is indeed a ſchiſm, and a rent between theſe churches: But which of them is the ſchiſmatic? Certainly not we that would own them as brethren, and join with them in prayer and ſacraments; but they that will not let us join with them, but upon ſuch terms, as we cannot with a ſafe conſcience ſubmit to.

And this, I fear, is the caſe between the church of Rome, and thoſe other churches that are of a different communion. The church of Rome taking in all the kingdoms and nations that adhere to her at this day, is not by all computation above one fourth part (if ſo much) of that company of men which profeſs the faith of Chriſt, and have the ſacraments, and all other eſſentials of a church. Yet all thoſe churches are divided from her. Here now is a ſchiſm, and a fearful one. But the queſtion is, at whoſe door the ſin lies? Why truly, it is to be fear'd, *that church* which hath impoſed new terms of communion, which were never heard of in the primitive times; *that church* which, taking advantages of the ſmallneſs of ſome churches, and the diſtreſſes of others, hath erected an univerſal monarchy over the chriſtian world, and inſtead of contenting herſelf with being a part of the catholic church, will needs be the whole, and excommunicate all thoſe that refuſe to yield obedience to the biſhop

of Rome, as the vicar of Chriſt, and the only viſible head of the church; I ſay, *this* uſurping, monopolizing *church* is, in all reaſon, the ſchiſmatic; and not thoſe other churches that are ſhut out of her communion.

Well, but there is one argument goes about, which, notwithſtanding all we have ſaid, doth irrefragably prove, that the church of Rome, and no other, is that true viſible church that Chriſt is to have always upon earth.

I have met with it in a little manuſcript paper: And it is ſaid to have done ſome feats. I will ſpeak two or three words to it, and ſo conclude this point.

The argument is this: "*If you deny the church of "Rome to be the only true viſible church, then I deſire "that you will be pleas'd to ſhew me a viſible church "oppoſing the church of Rome in thoſe doctrines where-"in you differ from them, and practiſing in thoſe points "as the church of England doth, from the time of "Chriſt till the reformation. For if there was any "time wherein there was no chriſtian church, but that "in communion with the ſee of Rome, it muſt, I con-"ceive, be granted, that* that *is the true church, or that "Chriſt had no viſible one upon earth.*"

This is the paper, word for word, leaving out the preface, about which we have no controverſy; and the force of it lies in theſe two points: *We cannot ſhew a viſible church that hath, from Chriſt's time to the reformation, oppoſed the church of Rome in thoſe doctrines and practices wherein we differ from her*; and, *There was a time when all chriſtian churches were in communion with the church of Rome.* The concluſion from hence is, *That therefore the preſent church of Rome is the only true church of Chriſt upon earth.*

This

This is as surprising a conclusion from such premises, as can enter into the mind of a man. First of all we cannot shew a visible church that hath, from Christ's time to the reformation, opposed the church of Rome in her pretences; therefore the church of Rome is the only true church. Why, supposing that all the churches of the world had, from Christ's time to this, agreed with the church of Rome in all points, both of doctrine and practice, yet doth it from thence follow, that the church of Rome is the only visible church? No, not in the least: She is still but a part of the visible church, and the other churches that agree with her are as much parts of it as she. And if this be so, how can it in the least follow, that when churches are divided from her both in doctrine and practice, she is any more the whole visible church than they? Why are not they as much the visible church, after they are divided, as they were before, supposing it was her fault and not theirs, that occasioned this division and separation? And if the visible church can be but in one communion, why are not those churches that are separated from the church of Rome, the only true catholic visible church, and the church of Rome no part of it at all, since it appears that in this case it is she that hath caused the schism?

But that I may fully expose the sophistry of this argument to the meanest understanding, and enable every one to give an answer to it, I will put the whole force of it into an obvious case.

The argument is, That if we cannot shew a visible church distinct from the Roman, that hath in all times, from the beginning, oppos'd the doctrines and practices of the present church of Rome, then it will undeni-

ably follow, that the preſent church of Rome is the only viſible church.

Why now, methinks, this is juſt ſuch an argument as this:

A father bequeaths a large eſtate among his children, and their children after them. They do for ſome generations quietly and peaceably enjoy their ſeveral ſhares, without diſturbance from each other. At laſt, one branch of this family (and not of the eldeſt houſe neither) ſtarts up, and being of greater power than the reſt, and having got ſome of the ſame family to join with him, very impudently challengeth the whole eſtate to himſelf, and thoſe that adhere to him; and would diſpoſſeſs all the reſt of the deſcendants, accounting them no better than baſtards, though they be far more in number than his own party, and have a far greater ſhare in the inheritance. Upon this they conteſt their own right againſt him, alledging their father's will and teſtament, and their long poſſeſſion, and that they are lawfully deſcended from their firſt common anceſtor.

But this gentleman, who would lord it over his brethren, offers this irrefragable argument for the juſtice of his claim. If, ſays he, you deny me and my adherents to be the ſole proprietors of this eſtate, then it lies upon you to ſhew, That ever ſince the death of our progenitor, who left us this eſtate, there hath appeared ſome of the family who have always oppoſed my claim to this eſtate. But *that* you cannot ſhew; and therefore I have an undoubted title to the whole eſtate: I am lord of the whole inheritance.

I do appeal to any man living, whether this plea would paſs in any court of judicature; nay, whether any private man, tho' never ſo unlearned, can believe that

that this insolent pretender doth offer any fair reason for the dissseising the coheirs of their inheritance. And yet this is just the argument with which those learned gentlemen would persuade us to give up our birthright, to depart from that share of the inheritance we have in the catholic church.

Well, but what will the coheirs that are concerned say to this argument? Why there are three things so obvious to be said to it, that if the persons concerned have not the wit to hit upon them, they are fit to come under the custody and guardianship of this pretended heir-general. May they not say to this gentleman that makes so universal a claim,—Sir, your claim was not so early as the death of our forefather, who left us this joint-inheritance. Your ancestors and ours lived a great while peaceably together, without any clashing about this estate; and we were suffered for some ages to enjoy our own right, without any molestation from you or those you derive from: And the case being so, there was no need of opposing your pretences, because you made none. But then, (which is the second thing) when you did set up for this principality, and wheedled some of our family, and forced others to join with you, you know you were presently opposed by others of our family, who would not so easily part from their rights. You know, that as soon as ever you made your claim, there were some that stoutly declared against it, tho' they had not power, and strength, and interest enough in the world to stem the torrent of your ambition.

But then thirdly, may they say; supposing it was not so; supposing you had met with no rub in your pretences (which yet you know you did); supposing our family were not so suddenly aware of the mischief

that

that would come upon them from thoſe your uſurpations, as to make a preſent oppoſition; doth now it follow, that becauſe no oppoſition was juſt then made to your pretences, that therefore your pretenſions to the whole eſtate are juſtifiable? No, we can prove they are not ſo; for it is plain by the Teſtament, by the ſettlement of our common father, that we have as much a right to our parts in this eſtate as you have, or as your anceſtors ever had. Tell not us, that you were not at firſt, or that you were not always, oppoſed in your claim: But tell us by what right or juſtice you can pretend to be the ſole lord of this inheritance. Let the will of our common parent be produced, and that will plainly ſhew, that we have as much a ſhare in this eſtate as you have.

This allegory is ſo pat to our buſineſs, and the application of it ſo eaſy to our preſent caſe, that I think I ſhould injure the moſt vulgar underſtanding, if I ſhould ſuſpect his ability to make that uſe of it which I intend.

And then, fourthly, as for the other thing which the paper uſes as an argument of the church of Rome being the only viſible church, namely this, *That if there was any time wherein there was no chriſtian church but* that *in communion with the ſee of Rome, it muſt be granted that that is the true church*, meaning *the only true church:* I ſay, if this be any argument, it will prove a great deal more than the author of the paper would have it; for it will prove as ſtrongly, that the Britiſh church here in this nation is the only viſible church of Chriſt, or that the church of Conſtantinople is the only church of Chriſt, or that the church of Alexandria in Egypt is the only true church of Chriſt, as it will prove that the church of Rome is the only church of Chriſt. For if there was any time

wherein

wherein there was no christian church but what was in communion with the British church, then, according to this argument, it must be granted, that the British church is the only true church. If there was a time wherein there was no christian church but what was in communion with the see of Constantinople, then it must be granted, that the Greek church, under the patriarch of Constantinople, is the only true visible church of Christ; and so it may be carried on as to the church of Alexandria, and several other churches yet in being. For whenever that time was, when all those churches were in communion with all other churches (as I believe it was in the primitive times of christianity) I think it is evident, that the church of Rome was as much in communion with the British churches, as the British churches were in communion with the see of Rome; and so as to all the rest. If now the British churches, and all other churches being once in communion with the church of Rome, be a good argument that the church of Rome is the only true church, then sure the church of Rome, and all other churches, being once in communion with the British church, is as good an argument that the British church, and we of the church of England that are now come in their place, are the only true church. And this, in truth, is all that they get by this argument.

But we are not so arrogant as to pretend to be the only true church of Christ, though I am sure, all things considered, we have more reason to do so than they. But we are contented to be a part of the catholic visible church; and we wish they would be so too. And we have this comfort, that we can say we are a sound part of the catholic church, which we heartily wish we could say of them; but to our grief we cannot.

I am ſenſible I have made a long and a tedious diſcourſe about this buſineſs of the church: but I thought it needful to do it (having ſo fair an occaſion given me by my text) that I might furniſh you with anſwers to thoſe people who are ſo continually talking about the church, the true church, the one viſible church, out of which there is no ſalvation. This I am ſure of, and I conclude with it; So long as you continue in our communion, you are in the communion of the true church of Chriſt, and in an infinitely ſafer communion than if you were in theirs. I dare anſwer for the ſalvation of all thoſe who, continuing in our church, do live up to the principles of it; but I dare anſwer nothing for them who being brought up in this church, and having ſo great opportunities given them of knowing the truth, do yet depart from it. I pray God they may be able to anſwer for themſelves.

I pray God make us all honeſt and wiſe, and then I am ſure as to our principles we ſhall continue the ſame we are now, but as to our lives and converſations we ſhall grow much better.

May God of his infinite mercy grant this to us for the ſake of his dear Son Jeſus Chriſt—To whom, &c.

This being the ſermon that gave occaſion to the king's mandatory letter to the biſhop of London *to ſuſpend Dr.* Sharp; *and the biſhop having adviſed him to forbear preaching till his majeſty's diſpleaſure was removed; he was prevented from proceeding any farther in the examination of thoſe other five queries which he had propoſed at the end of the former ſermon, ſo that we have no more of his concluſion from this text.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

The Popiſh and Proteſtant doctrines concerning Confeſſion, explained and compared. And the popiſh doctrine of Auricular Confeſſion, proved not to be the doctrine of ſcripture and the antient church.

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper. But whoſo confeſſeth them, and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.

THESE words contain a very full tho' a very ſhort deſcription (and by how much the ſhorter ſo much I think the better) of true repentance; ſuch a repentance as God would accept: and that firſt negatively, in what it doth not conſiſt, or rather is not conſiſtent with it: and that in the former part of the verſe, *He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper.* And ſecondly, poſitively in what it doth conſiſt: and that in theſe two things,

things, confeſſing our ſins, and forſaking them. *Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall find mercy.*

Repentance, however it may appear to ſome as a ſingle duty, yet in truth it is one full half of all that the goſpel requires of us. For the whole condition of the new covenant is comprized in theſe two things, *viz. Repentance towards God*, and *faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; Acts xx. 21. as the apoſtle has declared.

It muſt therefore be of infinite conſequence, that we all be rightly inſtructed in the nature of repentance, ſince there is ſo great ſtreſs laid upon it. If we take falſe meaſures in this point, it is as much as our ſouls are worth. And yet as things go in the world, tho' nothing be more plainly and fully declared in the holy ſcriptures than the nature of this repentance, as to all the branches of it, ſo that no man of but tolerable parts, that will bring an honeſt mind along with him, can eaſily miſs of rightly informing himſelf from thence of all that he is concerned to know about this duty; yet, I ſay, as matters now ſtand, there is ſcarce any doctrine of religion more obſcured, more miſrepreſented, more diſtorted and corrupted, even to the great peril of the ſouls of men, than this doctrine of repentance is.

Some men there are who, for the advancing the authority of the clergy, and the more fully eſtabliſhing their empire over the conſciences of men; as likewiſe for the enriching themſelves by other mens ſins, and at the ſame time making the conſciences of thoſe that pay for it as eaſy and as quiet as may be: I ſay, they have found out God knows how-many devices as to this buſineſs of repentance, which the writers of the ſcripture never knew of; nay, which indeed

eed are directly contrary to their sense and meaning. And such devices they are too, that at the same time hey both perplex the consciences of the more scrupulous sort of men, and also give too much encouragement o the vices and excesses of those that are loosely given.

The wise man here in the text tells us, that *whoso confesseth his sins, and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.* This is both plain enough, and home enough; and this same notion of repentance is all along inculcated both in the Old and New-testament; and no other but this. Every where a contrite confession of our sins to God, and a forsaking them, are thought enough to denominate a sinner a true penitent, and to entitle him to the mercies of God. And on the other side, whoever doth not come up to this; whoever doth not both these, is not qualified for God's mercies. The one without the other will not be sufficient. If a man confess, but doth not forsake, his sins are yet upon him; he is not in the state of a true penitent. On the other side, tho' a man do forsake his sins, if he do not confess them (which indeed it is hardly to be supposed that a man can do;) yet still his repentance is imperfect. It is not that repentance to which God, in his revelations to mankind, has made any promise of mercy and forgiveness. Both these things therefore are necessary, and where they do concur, they are all that is necessary.

But now the present doctrines of the church of Rome concerning this matter of repentance, are quite of another strain, as will appear by these three of them which I shall take occasion from my text to examine.

1. First of all they teach, That a man is not only to confess his sins to God, but he is bound to confess them/

them alſo to a prieſt; otherwiſe they will not be forgiven him. And when he doth thus make his confeſſion, he is bound to diſcover not only all his mortal ſins that, upon ſtrict examination of himſelf, he can remember, but alſo the circumſtances of them.

2. Secondly, whereas it is here ſaid, that he that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins, ſhall, without more-ado, find mercy; that is his ſins ſhall be forgiven him; they teach quite otherwiſe: For a man according to them, may confeſs his ſins and forſake them too, and yet they ſhall not be forgiven him, unleſs he make ſatisfaction for them over and above. They grant indeed, that upon his confeſſion to a prieſt, and receiving abſolution from him, the eternal puniſhment due to his ſins is remitted; but yet there is a very terrible temporal puniſhment to be undergone, either in this life or the next; which puniſhment the ſinner cannot be freed from, unleſs he either in his own perſon, or ſome other for him, do make a compleat ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice.

3. Thirdly, whereas by the words of our text one would think, that forſaking of ſin was as neceſſary to the finding mercy as confeſſion, and that one without the other would not be available for the procuring any man's pardon; they teach quite otherwiſe (if not directly, yet by conſequence.) For, according to their definitions, if a man do but devoutly and contritely confeſs to a prieſt, and receive his abſolution, he is preſently put into the ſtate of God's favour, ſo far as that he ſhall not ſuffer eternally for his ſins, but at laſt go to heaven; tho' in the mean time he do not forſake his ſins till his dying day: tho', as I ſaid before, if he have not made ſatisfaction, he muſt for a long time be kept in purgatory.

Theſe

These are the popish corruptions and innovations in this matter of repentance that we all complain of, and think we have just reason so to do. And these opinions and doctrines are not only taught by private men among them, but are partly the express definitions of their general council of Trent (which, with them, is authority never to be opposed and contradicted) and partly they are the undeniable consequences and results of what they have there decreed and declared concerning the sacrament of penance.

Of these three points I come to give an account: and I begin with their doctrine of confession; which I am the more desirous to insist upon, because really several among ourselves are apt enough to think that the church of Rome hath the advantage of us in this matter. And it is made a pretence by some, why they have left our communion, viz. that in our church they want the benefit of private confession, which in the church of Rome is strictly enjoined.

Now my business is to lay this matter plainly before you; to state both their doctrine and ours in this point of confession; and then, I dare say, it will easily appear which church is to be preferred upon this account.

1. First, then I shall shew, how far we of the reformed religion do allow of confession of sins unto men.

2. Secondly, what that doctrine of the church of Rome is, that we find fault with in this matter, and for what reasons it is justly blameable.

I. First then, I shall plainly lay before you what it is we teach as to this matter of confessing sins to men, whether priests or others. All the sins that can be confessed will fall under some of these three heads: they

are either ſuch whereby God is offended, and he only; or they are ſuch whereby ſome particular man is injured, as well as God offended; or laſtly, they are ſuch whereby ſcandal is given to the publick ſociety of chriſtians where we live, tho' no particular man be injured by them.

Now as to each of theſe kinds of ſins, let us examine what confeſſion to men is due.

1. And firſt of all, there is no doubt but that as to all theſe ſins that come under the ſecond head I have named, that is to ſay, all thoſe ſins whereby we have offended or injured our particular neighbours; there is no doubt, I ſay, that we are not only bound to confeſs them to God, as being tranſgreſſors of his law, but bound likewiſe to make ſatisfaction to our neighbours for the injury we have done to them by them. And that both by a penitential confeſſion and acknowledgment of them; and, if that be not ſufficient, by making ſuch further reparations as the caſe requires. This we are bound to do by the natural laws of juſtice and equity: and our Saviour hath ſufficiently intimated his pleaſure as to this in that precept of his, *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath aught againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy ways, firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Matt. v. 23, 24. In which words he plainly teaches us, that it is not enough when we have offended or affronted any perſon, to go and aſk God forgiveneſs for it, but we are to go and reconcile ourſelves to him, by acknowledging our faults, and making all ſuch reparations, as the injury requires; otherwiſe we are no ways capable of making our prayers to God for his forgiveneſs. O that we would all ſeriouſly think on this! If we did,

lid, it would not be possible for us to offer the least provocation, or to do the least injury to any man in the world. Or if we were so fooliſh, or so unhappy as to do it, we ſhould not be able take any reſt till we had made him ſatisfaction. For I account no man can be able to reſt quietly, who is not in a condition to ſay his prayers.

2. But ſecondly, as to all thoſe ſins which come under the third head I mentioned, viz. Sins, which, tho' they do not injure any particular perſon, yet injure the public ſociety of chriſtians, are an affront to the religion we profeſs, and give ſcandal to the church; as to theſe ſins, I ſay, not only our church, but all other proteſtant churches, do not only allow, but approve of confeſſion unto men; even a publick confeſſion; a confeſſion as open as the ſins committed were. For inſtance, if any man deny the faith of Chriſt, or go over to an heretical communion; or laſtly, live in the open practice of any ſin or ſins that are notoriouſly repugnant to the laws of Chriſt's religion; ſuch ſins as St. Paul inſtanceth in, when he directs the Corinthians, that, *If any man who is called a brother* (that is a chriſtian) *be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with ſuch a one no not ſo much as to eat.* 1 Cor. v. 11. As to ſuch perſons as theſe, I ſay, there is no proteſtant church but doth highly approve, that a public confeſſion ſhould be made in the face of the church of thoſe crimes by every penitent; that by this means ſatisfaction might be made to the chriſtian ſociety which was ſo ſcandalized, and the offending party may, as much as in him lies, undo all the miſchief which his bad example had done to his fellow-chriſtians.

And

And this indeed was the ancient practice of the church of Christ, in the primitive times. Such a course was always then taken with scandalous offenders. If a man was a known evil liver, if, upon admonition, he did not reform his life, he was, without more ado, cast out of the communion of the faithful. And there was no way to obtain his readmission, but by a repentance as public as his sin was. Nay, in those days the offending christians, who had their hearts disposed for repentance, were as forward of themselves to make this public confession, and to right the christian society they had injur'd, as the church was to require it of them.

And this is that confession we so often read of in ecclesiastical writers, and which they so much urge as of necessity to repentance, *viz.* a public confession of crimes, not that private whispering of sins into the ear of a confessor, which the church of Rome hath now brought into the place of it.

It is true, there is little of this to be seen in our times. A few foot-steps are left of the ancient ecclesiastical discipline, and that is all. Whether ever it will be restored or no, God only knows. But it is the wish and the prayer of all good men, that it may be. Popery first corrupted the discipline of the church; and happy had it been for us, if, when our first reformers took so much care to reduce doctrines of faith to the primitive standard, they had done the same as to our discipline. But perhaps it was not in their power. They sufficiently discover their good-will to it, in the preface of the commination-office; where, having mention'd that *There was a godly discipline in the primitive church; that such persons as stood convicted of notorious sins, were put to open penance, and punished in*

in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonish'd by their examples, might be more afraid to offend. They add in the next sentence, *That it is heartily to be wished that this discipline may be restor'd.* But till that be done, we must use such methods for bringing men to repentance as we can.

3. But thirdly, All protestants that I know of, do not only require acknowledgment and confession of injuries to the injur'd person, as necessary to repentance, and approve of public confession of public sins in the face of the church; but even as to private sins, whereby no particular man nor no society is injur'd, but only God offended (which is the third sort of sins that I mention'd in the first place;) I say, as to these, they not only allow of, but approve of confession to men, even private confession to men; and more especially such confession as is made to those who are ministers. No one protestant, so far as we can judge by the public declarations of their faith, is against private confession of sins to any good man, much less to a minister or pastor. Nay, they are so far from being against it, that they advise it, and recommend it in sundry cases as a most excellent instrument of repentance.

So that the papists do very unjustly traduce and calumniate the reformation, when they say that the protestants are against private confession. There is no such thing. There is no protestant church but gives it that due esteem and regard that it ought to have. All that they have done is to regulate it, to set it upon its true basis and foundation; which is done, not by requiring private confession as a thing necessary, but by exhorting men to it as a thing highly convenient in many cases. In all those instances where it can be useful, or serve any good purpose, it is both com-

mended and ſeriouſly adviſed; that is to ſay, where a ſinner either needs direction and aſſiſtance for the overcoming ſome ſin that he labours under; or where he is ſo overwhelmed with the burden of his ſins, that he needs the help of ſome ſkilful perſon to explain to him the terms of the goſpel, to convince him from the holy ſcriptures, that his repentance (as far as a judgment can be made of it) is true and ſincere, and will be accepted by God; and laſtly, upon the full examination of his ſtate, and his judgment thereupon, to give him the abſolution of the church. In all theſe caſes, no proteſtant (that underſtands his religion) is againſt private confeſſion. On the contrary, all the beſt writers of the proteſtants, nay, all the public confeſſions of the proteſtants (which give an account of their faith) are mightily for it, and do ſeriouſly recommend it. Mr. Calvin hath fully expreſſed their ſenſe as to this point.

"Let every faithful chriſtian (ſays he) remember, "that when he is burden'd and afflicted with the ſenſe "of his ſins, that he cannot eaſe himſelf without the "help of others, it is then his duty not to neglect "that remedy which the Lord hath preſcribed to him, "*viz.* That, for the eaſing of himſelf, he reſort to "private confeſſion with his paſtor; and that for the "gaining comfort to himſelf, he fetch in the aſſiſtance "of him whoſe office it is, both privately and publicly, to comfort the people of God by the doctrine of the goſpel. But yet this moderation is "always to be uſed, that where God hath not laid "impoſitions, we ſhould not lay impoſitions on our "own conſciences. Hence it follows, that this private confeſſion ought to be free, and ſhould not be "required of all, but only recommended to thoſe

"who

" who find they have need of it." Thus far Mr. Calvin; and in the same place, where he doth thus recommend private confessions, doth he also speak great things of the benefits of private absolution, in order to the easing and comforting afflicted consciences.

And this sense of his is the general sense of the protestants abroad. If there be any difference among them, it is, That the Lutherans are more strict in requiring private confession than either the French or Dutch protestants are.

As for our own church, she has directly given her judgment in the matter, as we have now represented, *viz.* in the *public exhortation*, which is to be read when notice is given of a communion. There it is advised, That if there be any of the congregation *that cannot by other means quiet his own conscience, but requireth comfort or counsel; then he should come to some discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness.*

This is the doctrine of the protestants concerning confession; and this I think may be justified to all the world.

II. But the popish doctrine in this matter is quite of another strain, and serves to quite different purposes. Which, what it is, and upon what grounds we find fault with it, I come in the second place to shew.

The church of Rome, you are to know, have made repentance to be a sacrament, *viz.* the sacrament by which only sins committed after baptism are to be forgiven. And of this sacrament of repentance

they have made three parts; 1. Contrition for ſin; 2. Confeſſion to a prieſt; 3. Satisfaction. Whoever performs theſe three things, upon the prieſt's abſolution, his ſins are forgiven. And all theſe three conditions (ſay they) are neceſſary to the obtaining pardon and reconciliation.

By confeſſion, they mean not confeſſion to God, nor confeſſion to our neighbour in caſe of injuries, nor confeſſion to the church in caſe of public notorious ſins; but private confeſſion to a prieſt, which is that they call auricular confeſſion, becauſe it is whiſper'd into his ear. This is that confeſſion they make a neceſſary part of repentance, and without which (ſuppoſing we have opportunity) ſin is not forgiven.

I will give you their ſenſe (as near as I can tranſlate) in the words of two of their general councils which have eſtabliſh'd it as a law among them. The firſt is, the council of Lateran. There it is order'd, "That every man and woman, after they come to "years of diſcretion, ſhould faithfully confeſs all their "ſins privately to their own prieſt, at leaſt once in "the year, and endeavour faithfully to perform the "penance that is enjoyn'd them; and after this they "ſhould come to the ſacrament, at leaſt at Eaſter, "unleſs the prieſt, upon ſome reaſonable cauſe, do "judge it fit for them to abſtain at that time. And "whoever doth not perform this, he is to be excommunicated out of the church; and if he die, he is "not to be allow'd chriſtian burial." Thus the council of Lateran, very modeſtly. But the council of Trent goes much farther, and clincheth the buſineſs as effectually as is poſſible; for they decree that, "Whoever ſhall affirm that this private confeſſion to a "prieſt was not inſtituted by Chriſt, and is by divine

"right

" right neceſſary to ſalvation, let him be accurs'd." The ſame council orders that, " All mortal ſins which " a man, after diligent examination of himſelf, finds " his conſcience to be burden'd with, even thoſe that " are moſt ſecret, tho' they be only in thought or " deſire, even all theſe are to be repeated to the prieſt " in confeſſion; and not only the ſins themſelves, but " alſo the circumſtances of them, that may change " the kind of the ſin." And, to bind this the faſter upon the conſciences of men, they made this decree, that, " Whoſoever ſhall ſay, that in the ſacrament of " penance, it is not by divine law neceſſary, for the " obtaining forgiveneſs, to confeſs all and every mor- " tal ſin, which, after a diligent enquiry, a man " can remember, even the moſt ſecret, together with " the circumſtances that change the kind of the ſin; " or ſhall ſay, that ſuch confeſſion is only of uſe for " the directing or comforting the penitent, but is not " neceſſary, let every ſuch man be accurs'd."

This is the plain avow'd doctrine of the preſent church of Rome, as to confeſſion. But we ſay it is a great error introduced into the doctrine of repentance, and of very ill conſequence to the ſouls of men, as will appear by theſe three following things, which I ſhall very briefly repreſent.

1. Firſt, They here make a thing to be of Chriſt's inſtitution, and of neceſſity to ſalvation, that hath no manner of foundation in the holy ſcriptures, either in the Old or New-teſtament.

If they could but produce one text of the Bible, wherein it did appear that this auricular ſacramental confeſſion of ſins to a prieſt was recommended, either by our Lord, or his apoſtles; or one text, wherein it did appear that it was practis'd by any chriſtian,

either of the clergy or laity in any instance; or lastly, one text, whereby it doth appear that it was so much as mention'd or thought on by the holy men of that time; I say, if they could produce any one text of scripture for the proof of any of these things, they would do something: But we are sure they cannot. And therefore to impose private confession, as a necessary condition of repentance upon all the christian world, under pain of damnation, that is intolerable. One text there is indeed, they make a great noise with, and it looks, at first sight, plausibly to their purpose; but, upon examination, it will be found nothing at all to their purpose. It is in the fifth chapter of St. James's epistle, where the apostle hath this passage, *Confess* (says he) *your sins one to another, that ye may be healed: for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

But first of all; it can never be made appear, that the confession which St. James here prescribes, is to be understood of private confession to a priest; nay, on the contrary, it is manifest from the very words, that the apostle speaks of such a confession as is mutual and reciprocal, *Confess your sins one to another:* Which speech intimates, that both parties are to confess; both the confessor and the confessed. But now it is not the usage of the church for the confessors to confess to the people who confess to them. Furthermore, it is undeniably plain, that the apostle doth not here speak of the sacramental confession of the church of Rome, upon this account; that the end for which he recommendeth confession to one another, is only this, That by the prayers of one another *they may be healed* of their sickness, (whether those sicknesses be the diseases of the soul or of the body it matters not)

for

for it immediately follows, *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

But what is this to the popish confession? The end of that is not so much to get cured, either of our sins or our sicknesses, by the prayers of him we confess to; but to obtain the pardon of our sins, by receiving his absolution; which is quite another thing. But to proceed further: As there is in scripture no command, no practice, no mention of this sacramental private confession, so there is much against it. For the scripture plainly prescribes other terms of forgiveness of sins, and assures us of pardon and the mercy of God, merely upon *our confessing to God, and forsaking our sins*, without any more ado. David certainly never dream'd of the necessity of auricular confession, when he spake these words in the thirty-second psalm, and the fifth verse; *I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquities have I not hid. I said I will confess my sin unto the Lord, and lo! thou forgavest me the iniquity of my sin.* Upon his confessing his sins to the Lord above, his sin was forgiven. And, lest we should think that this was an extraordinary privilege vouchsaf'd unto him, and such a one as others were not to expect, he adds further, *For this cause shall every one that is godly make his prayer unto thee in an acceptable time.* ver 11. To the same purpose St. John; *If we confess our sins* (meaning to God, for to him the whole context restraineth it) *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, 1 John i. 9. And thus again; if we can gather any thing from any parable of our Saviour's, we may certainly gather this from the parable he makes of the *publican and pharisee that went together into the temple to pray*, that, in order to the

forgiveneſs of ſins, God requires no more than an humble, ſorrowful and contrite heart, confeſſing what is paſt, and amending for the time to come, without reſpect to any external adminiſtration of confeſſion to men. For it is plain that the publican, Luke xviii. 13. who is there made the example of a penitent ſinner, upon his *ſmiting on his breaſt*, and *ſaying* in private to God, *O God be merciful to me a ſinner, went away juſtified*; that is, accepted of God, when the other was rejected. The ſame thing may be gather'd from that other parable of the prodigal ſon.

It appears from what I have ſaid (and much more might be ſaid to this purpoſe) what little colour there is for this doctrine, That ſacramental confeſſion was inſtituted by Chriſt, and by him made neceſſary to true repentance, ſince from the ſcriptures we ſee the quite contrary.

But the ſtrength of the Romaniſts doth not lie, as to this point, in the ſcripture (nor indeed in many other points;) but in the multitude of vouchers which they pretend to have for their doctrine in antiquity. They give out, that this was the doctrine of the fathers, and the practice of the ancient chriſtians. Well, this we ſhall now conſider in the ſecond place.

2. And as to this pretence of theirs, we ſhall ſay two things: The firſt by way of confeſſion. In the firſt place, we grant that public confeſſion of ſins in the face of the church, eſpecially of notorious and ſcandalous ſins, was much in uſe in the primitive church, and was a conſtant part of the ancient diſcipline. We grant alſo, that private confeſſion of ſins to a diſcreet miniſter, in order to the obtaining direction and comfort to the penitent, was both frequently recommended, and frequently practis'd in all times; but more

eſpecially

especially after the public confessions grew into disuse. But then, having granted this, we say, in the second place, that this makes nothing in the world to that confession which is now required in the church of Rome; for, as to their auricular sacramental confession, we dare affirm these three things:

(1.) First, That it was never enjoined or commanded by any law of the church, as a necessary duty incumbent upon all christians, till the council of Lateran, about four hundred years ago; which council was the same that establish'd the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that other doctrine of deposing of princes in case they were heretical: But this is not all. Even in that council, this business of confession was only enjoin'd as an ecclesiastical constitution, and not bound upon us by any law of God; and that was modest enough, in comparison of what came afterward: But afterwards came the council of Trent, almost in the memory of our fathers; and that was the first council that ever decreed private confession to a priest to be the ordinance of Christ, and necessary to salvation. So that whatever boast the Romanists make of antiquity being on their side, as to this point, it is certain that auricular confession, as it now stands, was not a law of the church, or thought necessary, till within less than these hundred and fifty years.

(2.) But secondly, we will go further; it is certain, that it cannot be made to appear from any testimony of the ancient fathers, that confession of sins to a priest in private, was ever looked upon as any more than a thing very advisable, and very useful in several cases, both for the directing a man in the conduct of his religious life, and as a means for the obtaining

taining comfort if he was in any affliction or perplexity.

(3.) But thirdly, it is alſo certain, that the ancient fathers of the chriſtian church were ſo far from thinking that private confeſſion was an eſſential part of repentance; they were ſo far from thinking that it was inſtituted by Chriſt, and neceſſary to ſalvation (which is that which the church of Rome now teaches) that they taught directly the contrary; as abundance of inſtances might be given, if this were a proper place. "What have I to do with men (ſaith St. Auguſtine) that they ſhould hear my confeſſion, as "tho' they could heal my diſeaſe?" St. Chryſoſtome alſo to the ſame purpoſe. "It is not neceſſary (ſays "he) that thou ſhouldeſt confeſs in the preſence of "witneſſes; let the iniquity of thy offences be made "in thy thoughts; let this judgment be made without "a witneſs; let God only ſee thee confeſſing: Therefore I entreat and beſeech you, that you would continually make your confeſſions to God; for I do "not bring thee into the theatre of thy fellow-ſervants, neither do I conſtrain thee to diſcover thy "ſins unto men. Unclaſp thy conſcience before God, "and ſhew thy wounds to him, and of him aſk a medicine." And very many other paſſages he hath to this purpoſe.

Doth this now favour the Romiſh doctrine concerning confeſſion? doth it not directly contradict it? what ſhall we ſay? The council of Trent decrees, that *Whoſoever ſhall affirm that confeſſion of all our mortal ſins to a prieſt* (that we can remember) *is not neceſſary to the obtaining forgiveneſs of them, ſhall be accurs'd.* St. Auguſtine, St. Chryſoſtome, and many others, do point-blank affirm, that this confeſſion is not

not necessary; but that forgiveness may be had without it. Either therefore the Roman anathema's are of no force, nor to be regarded by us; or, if they be, St. Augustin and St. Chrysostome, and other such good men, are involved in them as deeply as we protestants.

3. But then thirdly, and lastly: As they have neither scripture nor ancient fathers on their side; so neither have they any colour of reason for this business of confession, as they have order'd it. For, whilst they teach that every man is bound to confess all his mortal sins, even the most secret, even the sins of his thoughts and desires, that, after the most diligent examination, he finds himself guilty of, and that if he do not so confess, he is not qualified for pardon; and whilst, on the other side, it is a most difficult matter for a penitent to know which of his sins are mortal, and which are not, and likewise when it is he hath made a diligent examination of his own heart concerning his sins, and when he hath not; what a world of endless scruples and perplexities is every man almost by this doctrine led into? For, at this rate, what man can be assured that he hath confess'd all his sins so particularly, so circumstantially as he ought to do; or that he hath used that fidelity and care in examining his own conscience, that the law of Christ exacts from him? This is so true, that it was long ago observ'd by a famous man of their own, that, according to the cases, enquiries, and conclusions that the casuists had made in this matter of confession, it was impossible for any man to make a right confession.

But further: This is not the only evil consequence that follows upon that doctrine; for this mischief also attends

attends it, that, according to this notion, not he that moſt truly repents him of his ſins, and moſt endeavours to forſake them, is beſt qualified for the mercy of God; but he that moſt accurately repeats them to the confeſſor, and enumerates their ſeveral circumſtances. For let a man be never ſo much ſorry for his ſins, and never ſo much endeavour to reform his life, yet if he do not perform this part of the ſacrament of penance, he is not in ſo ſafe a condition as that man is, who is leſs ſorry for his ſins, and doth leſs endeavour to forſake them, ſuppoſing he do but confeſs well to the prieſt, and receive his abſolution.

Laſtly, to conclude: As this confeſſion is managed by the church of Rome, it is ſo far from being a check or a bridle upon a man to have a care of committing the ſame ſins again, that he hath thus confeſs'd (which is the greateſt, and indeed, the only thing in reaſon that is pretended for the uſefulneſs of this kind of confeſſion,) that, on the contrary, as the thing is managed, it gives a great encouragement for ſinners to continue in their ſins. For this being their doctrine, that whenever a man is ſorry for his ſins, and confeſſeth them to the prieſt, and thereupon receiveth his abſolution, upon promiſe to perform the penance enjoin'd, the man ſo doing doth that very moment receive remiſſion, as to the eternal puniſhment of his ſins, and is put into a ſtate of God's favour; what follows from hence, but that the man may now, without ſcruple, or trouble of conſcience, go on again in the ſame courſe of life? All his old ſins are now waſhed away, and he begins upon a new ſcore, and it is but repeating his confeſſion, and getting a new abſolution, and he is as ſafe as if he had never been a ſinner. This is one of the natural conſe-

quences

quences of this doctrine; and that a great many in the Roman communion do frequently reduce this into practice, is too evident to be denied.

And now I do appeal to all men that will impartially consider these things that I have now represented (and I am sure I have faithfully represented matters as they stand on both sides,) whether their doctrine or ours have the better foundation; whether our doctrine be not much more agreeable to the scriptures, to reason, and to the primitive practice; more tending to the ease, and peace, and comfort, and more to the edification of souls, than their doctrine is.

Let all of us therefore, when we find ourselves burden'd with the weight of our sins, apply to God, and unburden ourselves of them by confession to him. If we need either advice or assistance, or direction, or comfort, we may call in the assistance of pious and discreet ministers; nay, we ought in prudence to do so, and we are wanting to ourselves, if we do not. But still the confession that is necessary to the obtaining our pardon, must ever be understood of confession to God. Whosoever humbly and sorrowfully confesses his sins to him, and endeavours to forsake them, such a man shall find pardon whether he confess to men or no.

This is the protestant doctrine, and let us all adhere to it, and practise it.

And God Almighty give us grace, that we may no longer *cover our sins*, but with humble and penitent hearts *confess them* and *forsake them*. So shall we *find mercy* through Jesus Christ, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

Againſt the doctrines of the church of Rome, concerning Satisfaction and Purgatory.

The ſecond ſermon on the following text.

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper. But whoſo confeſſeth them, and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.

WHAT I undertook to ſhew from this text was, That the church of Rome was corrupt, and had innovated in the matter of repentance. I have already inſiſted on that which they call *auricular ſacramental confeſſion*, and which they have made neceſſary to true repentance. Of this having largely treated before, I ſhall not repeat now any thing that I ſaid.

The ſecond corruption with which we charge the church of Rome in the matter of repentance, is, their doctrine of *ſatisfaction*. Satisfaction is, by them, made one

one of the three neceſſary and eſſential parts of repentance. And what they mean by ſatisfaction, I ſhall now declare to you.

Thus far we are all agreed, that God Almighty, as the governor of the world, in his infinite wiſdom, thought it fit not to pardon the ſins of mankind without ſome ſatisfaction or compenſation made to him for the breach of his laws.

Thus far likewiſe we do agree in the ſecond place, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was God and man, did, in his own perſon, by his incarnation, and eſpecially by his cruel ſufferings and ignominious death upon the croſs, make ſuch a ſatisfaction to God for the ſins of mankind, that, in conſideration thereof, he was willing to pardon them.

And thus far likewiſe, in the third place, is agreed on both ſides, that to all true penitents this ſatisfaction that Chriſt made to God, is imputed, and ſhall be available for the everlaſting ſalvation of their ſouls. Thus far both parties concur in their doctrine.

But then here we begin to differ. We ſay, according to the doctrine of the ſcriptures, that wherever the guilt of ſin is remitted to any perſon, the puniſhment is remitted alſo. And we ſay likewiſe, that the caſe is the ſame as to ſins committed before baptiſm and ſins committed after; whoſoever truly repents of his ſins, which he hath committed after he became a chriſtian, thoſe ſins ſhall as truly be forgiven to him, as thoſe were that were committed by him before baptiſm.

But now they teach quite otherwiſe. They ſay there is not the ſame remiſſion of ſins after baptiſm as there was before. The ſins of the heathen ſtate were all done away intirely by the ſacrament of baptiſm; but

but as for thoſe that are committed afterwards, there is a different conſideration ; a full ſatisfaction muſt be made for them by the perſon that committed them, otherwiſe they will not be forgiven. They grant indeed, that every true penitent ſhall, by virtue of Chriſt's ſatisfaction, have his portion in the life to come at the long-run : but, for all that, if he do not make ſatisfaction for all his mortal ſins in this life, he muſt do it ſeverely in the next. They diſtinguiſh between the guilt of ſin, and the puniſhment of it. They ſay, that to every chriſtian that repents, his ſin is forgiven, as to the guilt of it, ſo that he ſhall not die eternally ; but notwithſtanding there is a temporal puniſhment due, which, for all the forgiveneſs of the guilt, the ſinner muſt undergo either here or hereafter ; either here, by performing ſuch ſevere penances as the faults require ; or hereafter, by enduring a ſevere puniſhment in the flames of purgatory. And, leſt we ſhould think this temporal puniſhment of purgatory but a jeſting matter, they aſſure us that it is not ſo ; but both as to the duration of it, and the ſeverity of it, it is very dreadful. For the duration of it, it may laſt (for aught we know) from the time of our death till the day of judgment. As for the ſharpneſs of it, they ſay it is, in all reſpects, as tormenting as the pains of hell itſelf ; and there is no difference but only this, that this puniſhment of purgatory ſhall at laſt have an end, but the pains of hell never ſhall.

Well ; but what way is there for making theſe ſatisfactions ? what remedy is there againſt theſe dreadful torments in the other life ? why, to this the council of Trent anſwers gravely, that ſatisfactions for our ſins are made partly by patiently ſuffering the af-

lictions that are ſent us by God, and partly by performing thoſe penances that are enjoined us by our prieſt upon confeſſion.

But the comfort is, there is a better way, and a much eaſier than this; and that I ſhall now give you an account of. There is a ſtock of merits left to the diſpoſal of the church; that is, both the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, as many of them as were more than enough for the ſatisfying for the eternal puniſhment of the ſins of mankind, and likewiſe the merits of all the ſaints, that were more than enough for the ſatisfying for their own ſins: I ſay, all theſe are the ſtock or treaſure of the church, and may be diſpenſed out to particular perſons, as the governor of the church, the vicar of Chriſt upon earth, ſhall think fit.

And two ways there are by which the benefit of theſe merits may be made over to us; that is to ſay, by indulgence, and by procuring maſſes to be celebrated, and alms to be given for us after we are dead. By either of theſe ways, our perſonal ſatisfaction for our ſins is excuſed. And according to the proportion of theſe indulgences or maſſes that we have purchaſed, our puniſhment in the next world will either be leſſened, or wholly taken away. In proportion to the ſhare of the church's treaſure that we have provided to ourſelves, either we ſhall never come into purgatory at all, or, if we do, we ſhall ſtay there the leſs time, or our pains will be proportionably abated.

This is a plain repreſentation of their doctrine, as to this matter. And I think no man among them, that underſtands their religion, but will own all that I have now delivered to be the ſenſe of their church. But how falſe and unreaſonable this doctrine is, and

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of what miſchievous conſequences to the ſouls of men, will appear by repreſenting theſe two following things:

1. Firſt of all, there is no ground either in reaſon or ſcripture, that when God hath once forgiven a man's ſins, as to the guilt of them, he ſhould afterwards inflict the puniſhments of thoſe ſins upon the offender: which is the main principle upon which their doctrine proceeds.

2. Secondly, their doctrine of purgatory, that is to ſay, that there is a temporal puniſhment after this life to be inflicted upon all thoſe who have not made full ſatisfaction for their ſins, either by themſelves or others; though, in the mean time, the ſins have been repented of, and are forgiven by God; I ſay, this doctrine is altogether groundleſs, and not only ſo, but is againſt the tenor of the ſcriptures.

I. To theſe two things I ſhall ſpeak. And firſt of all, we ſay they do ill in this matter, to diſtinguiſh between the guilt of ſin and the puniſhment of it; and to affirm that God doth forgive the ſins of chriſtians upon their repentance, but doth not excuſe them from that temporal puniſhment that doth neceſſarily and inſeparably adhere to them: this, we ſay, is againſt both reaſon and ſcripture.

1. Firſt, of all, it is, in the reaſon of the thing, abſurd. For forgiveneſs of the guilt of a crime doth, in the very nature of it, imply an exemption from the puniſhment that was due to that crime; otherwiſe it is not properly forgiveneſs. We do not here deny that good men after they have heartily repented of their ſins, and God hath forgiven them, may notwithſtanding afterwards be ſeverely viſited by God in this life; may fall into many afflictions and calamities, and ſometimes very ſad ones; this is granted on all hands: and whoſoever denies it, as he contradicts

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cripture, so he contradicts the experience of all ages. But this we say, these visitations, these sufferings, these afflictions which God sends upon those persons, are not properly punishments for those sins of theirs which God hath already forgiven, but are sent to them upon another account. They are the natural result of the constitution of things here below, and God makes use of them as chastisements, or as trials to pious persons. They are inflicted not as punishments, but as mercies; not as the effects of God's justice, but of his kindness; it is intended thereby that either something that was amiss in them may be reformed, or that their faith and patience and other virtues should be exercised both to their own final comfort, and the benefit of others that are about them. These are that discipline that God useth with his children, but not punishments properly so called.

But are not the temporal judgments of God, punishments upon bad men, and impenitent sinners? and do not good men suffer the very same judgments? Both these things are true; but yet we say, the same thing inflicted upon one sort of men is properly a punishment, but with respect to the other sort it is not. For instance, here is one man, by the sentence of the judge, ordered to be branded with a hot iron, for a crime that he is convicted of: here is another man, by the order of his physician, seared in one of his limbs for the cure of some ulcer or gangrene he hath contracted. Both these persons now suffer the same thing, and endure the same sort of pain and smart; but yet I hope no body will deny, that this sufferance is upon a quite different account, and hath a quite different notion. In the former case, what is inflicted is truly and properly a punishment, for the

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man ſuffers as a malefactor; in the latter, it is not a puniſhment, but a medicine, and the man ſuffers only in order to a cure. And the very ſame thing may be ſaid as to the afflictions of good and bad men in this life; which diſtinction, if it be applied, will perfectly ſolve all thoſe texts of ſcripture that are brought by the Romaniſts in favour of this their doctrine.

2. But ſecondly, we ſay further, this doctrine of theirs is not only unreaſonable in itſelf, but it is without any ground in ſcripture; nay, it is expreſsly againſt what the ſcripture declares. Our Saviour hath taught us, in our daily petitions, thus to pray; *Forgive us our debts* (meaning our ſins) *as we forgive our debtors*, Matt. vi. 12. But can any man be ſaid to forgive a debt to another, and yet at the ſame time require the payment of it either in whole or in part? Either therefore there is no puniſhment exacted after forgiveneſs of our ſins, or our Saviour commands us to pray daily for that which God will never grant us.

Furthermore, the forgiveneſs of our ſins is always repreſented in ſcripture as a thing perfectly free and gratuitous; as a pure effect of God's undeſerved favour and goodneſs. But how can that conſiſt with the popiſh notion of forgiveneſs, which ſuppoſeth, that we cannot be abſolved from the puniſhment of our ſins, till we have either here or hereafter paid the uttermoſt farthing that we were accountable for?

Laſtly, ſo far is God from exacting the puniſhment of any man's ſins after he hath repented of them, that he expreſly declares that he never will do it. Among other texts, that in Ezekiel is very remarkable; *If the wicked* (ſays he) *will turn away from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep all my ſtatutes, and*

and do that which is lawful and right (which is the just description of a true repentance) *he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions which he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him*, Ezek. xviii. 21, 22. Or, as other translations have it, *shall not be remembered to him*. And sure if God do not remember them, if God do not mention them, there is no fear that he will punish them, afterwards; and that for the preventing that punishment, the sinner must make a compleat satisfaction to the divine justice, either by himself or others, as the Romanists teach.

II. And thus much of the first proposition. The second is this: The popish doctrine of a dreadful temporal punishment after this life, to be inflicted on all those who have not made compleat satisfaction for all their sins in this life, is altogether groundless, having no foundation in scripture or antiquity, but directly repugnant thereto.

Their doctrine is, That all souls that have not made satisfaction for their sins while they lived, tho' all those sins were remitted, so that they shall never go to hell, but at last shall go to heaven; yet they shall, in the other state, undergo a grievous punishment in a certain kind of prison which they call *purgatory*, for so long time till they be perfectly purged of their sins.

But is there one word of this doctrine in the scriptures, or the ancient fathers? not a tittle. Two places they do indeed produce, which they say doth much countenance it; the one is that passage of our Saviour, where, speaking of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, he says, *That that sin shall neither be forgiven in this world, nor in that which is to come.* Matt. xii. 32. From whence they take the liberty to conclude, that some sins, tho' they are not forgiven in this world, may

may be forgiven in the world to come; and conſequently there is a purgatory, a place for the purifying ſouls from their ſins in the other ſtate.

But in anſwer to this, let us aſk them ſeriouſly this queſtion: Did our Saviour, in this place, ſpeak of the forgiveneſs of ſins in the other world with reſpect to the temporal puniſhment that was due to them, or the eternal? If he ſpoke of the forgiveneſs of the eternal puniſhment, then his words make nothing for purgatory, but much againſt it. For their doctrine is, that ſins, as to the eternal puniſhment of them, are, upon repentance, forgiven in this world, and not in the next; and that the ſtate of purgatory is only ordained as a temporal puniſhment of thoſe ſins for which ſatisfaction was not made in this life. But on the other ſide, if they ſay that our Saviour, when he ſaid that the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt *ſhould neither be forgiven in this world, nor the world to come*, meant this forgiveneſs of the temporal puniſhment that is due to crimes in the other world, which is their notion of purgatory, then they make our Saviour to ſpeak a flat contradiction; for they make him to ſay that this temporal puniſhment ſhall never be forgiven; which is, in other words, juſt thus; that this temporal puniſhment, which ſhall have an end, ſhall be an eternal puniſhment which ſhall never have an end: which, as it overthrows their doctrine of purgatory, ſo it is as great a contradiction as can be.

If any one then ſhould aſk, What is the meaning of our Saviour's expreſſion, that the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt *ſhall neither be forgiven in this world, nor in that which is to come*; I anſwer, the plain account of the phraſe is this: Our Saviour, as far as can be conjectured from this words, did not in the

leaſt think of the popiſh purgatory, nor any thing like it, when he uttered this ſpeech. All that he deſigned to expreſs was this, that the contempt and blaſphemy of the phariſees againſt the Holy Ghoſt (which they were guilty of, in ſaying that our Saviour did his miracles by the help of the devil, and not by the Spirit of God) was ſo grievous a ſin, that it ſhould be puniſhed ſeverely both in this world, and in the other. And the phraſe by which he expreſſeth this, was very well known to the Jews, to whom he ſpake; for he uſed it by way of alluſion to a tenet of theirs. It was a common received doctrine among the Jews, and is to this day, that for ſome ſins a man was pardoned preſently upon his repentance; that other ſins were not pardoned till the ſolemn day of expiation, and others not to be expiated but by ſome grievous temporal affliction; but that all would be expiated at the death of the offender, provided he were an Iſraelite, who, as ſuch, muſt have his portion in the happineſs of another world. To this doctrine of theirs our Saviour ſeems to have reſpect, when he tells them that this was a crime which ſhould not be expiated at their death, according to their conceit; but whoſoever ſhould be guilty of it, would have a miſerable portion in the world to come. This ſeems to be the full ſenſe of the expreſſion.

As for the other text of ſcripture which ſeveral of the Roman doctors urge for purgatory, it is that paſſage of St. Paul, where he ſays, that if any man, *upon the foundations* of chriſtianity, *which were laid* by the apoſtles, *do build hay and ſtubble*, and ſuch kind of rubbiſh, his works ſhould periſh, *and he ſhould ſuffer loſs*; *but he himſelf ſhould be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire*, 1 Cor. iii. 15. This ſeveral of the Romaniſts do thus interpret,

pret, that the man that was thus guilty, ſhould indeed, upon his repentance, be eternally ſaved at laſt; but yet he muſt be purged from his ſins after he died, by undergoing the fire of purgatory. An admirable proof of purgatory: as if every body did not underſtand the particle of ſimilitude here uſed, *ſo as by fire*, was enough to ſhew that St. Paul did not here intend an eſcape out of the fire literally; but ſuch an eſcape as men make out of an houſe that is on fire. The words ought to be rendered, *he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as out of the fire.* Now it is well known, that by this phraſe can be meant no more than this, that it would be a hard thing for the man to eſcape; he run a great riſque, his ſafety was very hazardous, and if he was preſerved, it would be with a great deal of difficulty. This expreſſion of eſcaping *as out of the fire*, was a common proverbial way of ſpeaking both among the Jews and among the heathens in the apoſtles time; and it is always uſed in this ſenſe both in the ſcripture and other authors. What elſe is the meaning of that paſſage in Amos; *Ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning?* Amos iv. 11. and of that other paſſage of Jude, ver. 28. *others ſave with fear, plucking them out of the fire?* Which expreſſions only ſignify the greatneſs of the danger, and the difficulty of eſcaping it: ſo that certainly we may conclude, that from this text no purgatory flames can be kindled. All that St. Paul ſays, is, that the teachers of falſe doctrines, thoſe that miſrepreſented chriſtianity, their works ſhould be conſumed; for time would diſcover truth, and truth ſhould prevail at laſt; but the perſons that thus taught falſely, that thus *built hay and ſtubble upon the foundation of Chriſt*, they ſhould for this their prevaricating, be in great danger of being ſeverely puniſhed:

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But yet, upon their repentance, they might escape; but it would be with a great deal of difficulty; their condition was very hazardous and dangerous.

Thus I have given an account of these two texts which the champions of the Romish faith lay the greatest stress upon; and I hope we may be all convinced, that they do not do the work they are brought for: and several of the Romanists themselves are indeed on our side in this matter, acknowledging freely, that neither of them are to be interpreted of purgatory. But this we are certain of, that if these two texts do not speak of purgatory, there are no other texts do; nay, not only so, but there are many texts speak against it.

The scripture doctrine concerning the condition of men, after they depart out of this body, is only this; that there are two estates belonging to dying men, a good one, and a bad one. As to all persons that die true believers and true penitents, they immediately, upon their death, are put into a happy condition, and shall continue in that condition till the day of judgment; at which time their happiness shall be compleated and consummated by the resurrection of their bodies. As for unbelievers, and wicked livers, and impenitents, they are immediately, upon their death, put into a miserable condition, and so shall continue for ever; tho' perhaps their misery will not have its consummation and extremity till the day of judgment, and the general conflagration of the world, as neither the other had their happiness compleated till that time. This is plainly the scripture account of the state of souls departed; and there is no mention there in the least of souls that are in purgatory torments, but rather much against it.

Our Saviour, in that famous parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 20,—23. doth ſeem thus to repreſent the ſtate of the other world, viz. that the ſouls of good men, immediately upon their death, are in a happy condition, and the ſouls of bad men in a ſtate of torments. For no ſooner did Lazarus die, but he was carried by angels into the boſom of Abraham (which boſom of Abraham was a common phraſe among the Iſraelites, as appears yet by their writings by which they uſed to expreſs the happineſs and bleſſedneſs of pious ſouls departed) and, on the other ſide, the covetous voluptuous rich man was put immediately into a ſtate of torment. Now tho' we grant that this diſcourſe of our Saviour is no more than a parable, yet we can never imagine that he would contrive a parable in ſuch a manner, that the very ground and foundation upon which it proceeded, ſhould be falſe: but this is not all. It is evidently plain from the whole current of the New-teſtament, that all perſons that die true penitents, and in the ſtate of ſalvation, are immediately put into a happy condition; and therefore conſequently there is no ſuch purging tormenting fire to be undergone by them, as the papiſts dream of. St. Paul, more than once, mentions two houſes or tabernacles; the one the tabernacle of the body that we are now cloathed with; the other that houſe from heaven with which good men be cloathed upon in the other life. But his diſcourſe always implies, that as ſoon as ever good men die, they go ſtrait to Chriſt, and ſhall *put on that heavenly tabernacle*, and paſs immediately into that *everlaſting city above, whoſe maker and builder is God.*

Furthermore, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt promiſed the penitent thief upon the croſs, that that *very day he ſhould be*

be with him in paradise. Now paradise certainly is the state or place of happiness that God hath prepared for all holy souls after their departure hence. There is no term more usual among the Jews, both the ancient and the modern, for the expressing this, than the term of paradise. But however, if it was not so usual, yet our Saviour's words fix it to that sense. The thief was *that day to be with him in paradise.* Now sure no body will say that our Saviour went to purgatory, but to heaven; and therefore the thief went thither also. And what can more destroy the doctrine of purgatory and satisfactions than this? for if satisfaction be necessary, as they teach it is, and if purgatory be the place where satisfactions are to be made after this life, then certainly the penitent thief, according to their doctrine, must have continued a long time in purgatory; for no satisfaction had he made for his sins, as to their temporal punishment, since he died after a vicious life, upon a very short and sudden repentance: but yet we see the quite contrary; for he did not go to purgatory, but to that place where our Saviour was to be, that is, the place of the blessed.

But if any objection be made against this instance; as that this thief had not received baptism when he repented, but that his shameful death was in the place of baptism to him, and consequently he had all his sins remitted to him without satisfaction, as all persons upon their baptism have; but as for sins committed after baptism, the case is otherwise: as to this, we say, that this pretence will be quite taken away by another text that I am going to mention. St. John, in the Revelations, tells us, that he *heard this voice from heaven*, and was commanded *to write it*; *blessed*

are the dead that die in the Lord, for they reſt from their labours, and their works follow them, Rev. xiv. 13. Here it is ſaid indefinitely of all the diſciples of Chriſt; all that die in his religion, and in his fear, that *bleſſed are they when they die, for they reſt from their labours.* But now how can this propoſition conſiſt with the doctrine of purgatory? If all that die in Chriſt do reſt from their labours, then it is very certain that none of them are puniſhed and tormented after they are dead. For how can reſt from labours ſtand with dreadful miſeries and cruel ſufferings, as ſouls in purgatory are ſaid to undergo? If this doctrine was true, they would not have a reſt from their labours, but only a change of them; they would go from one labour to another; from a light labour in this life, to a moſt heavy and inſupportable one in the other ſtate. No, certainly, to ſuppoſe that all that die in Chriſt, that is, all true penitents, do *reſt from their labours, and their works follow them*, (as St. John here, from the authority of the Holy Spirit, affirmeth) is to ſuppoſe, that they are all in a happy bliſsful condition, and that they receive the rewards of their virtue and and piety: And conſequently the whole doctrine of purgatory is but a romance; a thing invented not only without the warrant, but againſt the warrant of the the holy ſcriptures.

And as we do affirm, that this doctrine of purgatory is without ſcripture, ſo we do affirm that it is without, and againſt, the ſenſe and the doctrine of the ancient church of Chriſt for many centuries. This, I think, we may confidently ſay, and make it good, that there is no one father, nor any one council of the primitive church (that is owned by the church of Rome themſelves) for five hundred years after Chriſt, that

that ever taught the doctrine of purgatory, as they now teach and believe it: and, on the other side, we can produce several passages of several of the primitive fathers that do wholly make against it.

Two persons are indeed quoted by them, that were of great name and reputation in the church, who seem to talk on their side; and these are Origen and Tertullian: but neither of these mens testimonies will do any credit to their cause.

For as for Origen (so far as we can gather from his writings now extant, if indeed they be his) his opinion was, that all the punishments that God inflicted after this life, were purgatory punishments; that is, would have an end: and that after such a determinate time, both devils and wicked men, having undergone their purgations, should be released from their torments, and enter upon a new scene of things. But this makes nothing in the world to the doctrine of purgatory, as it is established in the church of Rome; for they make purgatory distinct from hell, holding the former to be temporal, but the other eternal.

As for the other father Tertullian, it is very certain that all the time he continued a catholic christian, he spoke not one word of purgatory (as far as appears by his writings;) but after he forsook the catholic communion, and turned to the side of Montanus, whom he held to be the Holy Ghost, then indeed he talked of a relief that departed souls, which died in an imperfect state, were to expect from their sufferings by the Paraclete; that is, by the Holy Ghost; which Paraclete he affirmed to be Montanus.

This is all the evidence and all the authority that the papists have for their purgatory from primitive an-

tiquity; and let them make the beſt they can of it, and much good may it do them. On the other ſide, it is very certain that the current of the antients runs perfectly againſt them; as might be made good, if this was a fit place for it.

But I will proceed no further in this argument. I hope I have given you ſo plain an account of the popiſh doctrine in this matter, and have ſo plainly confuted it from the ſcripture, that I hope the moſt ordinary capacity may underſtand it, and be ſatisfied of the erroneouſneſs of it.

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SERMON IX.

Againſt other corruptions and innovations in the Popiſh doctrine concerning Repentance.

The third ſermon on the following text.

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper. But whoſo confeſſeth them, and forſaketh them, ſhall find mercy.

YOU may pleaſe to remember, that my deſign was to take occaſion from theſe words to conſider the popiſh doctrines of repentance, and to endeavour to ſhew both the novelty, and the erroneouſneſs, and the danger of them.

And two doctrines of this kind I have already inſiſted upon:

Firſt, That of auricular ſacramental confeſſion. In treating of which, I both ſhewed how far our church and all other proteſtants do own and approve

of confeſſion to men, and what the doctrine of the church of Rome was in this matter; and alſo that this impoſition of theirs was a new thing without warrant from ſcripture, without warrant from antiquity, and that which was both unreaſonable in itſelf, and, in many caſes, of ill conſequence.

The ſecond general error I inſiſted upon was, the doctrine of ſatisfactions to be made in perſon by every ſinner, even after his ſin is forgiven him, either in this life, or in the purgatory flames of the other world, unleſs he prevent it, by procuring indulgences, or getting maſſes to be ſaid for him. Now, in oppoſition to this doctrine, I ſhewed, that there is no ground either in reaſon or ſcripture, that, when God hath once forgiven a man's ſins, as to the guilt of them, he ſhould afterwards inflict the puniſhment of theſe ſins upon the offender; (which is the main principle upon which their doctrine proceeds:) And that their doctrine of purgatory hath no foundation in ſcripture, or in early antiquity, but, on the contrary, is againſt the tenor of both.

I now proceed to a third doctrine of the church of Rome concerning this matter of repentance, which doth flatly contradict the notion of repentance here deliver'd in the text, and is likewiſe of miſchievous conſequence to the ſouls of men; and that is, that they make contrition, with the prieſt's abſolution, at any time ſufficient to waſh away all our ſins, and to procure the pardon of God for them.

This is the avowed doctrine of the whole church of Rome, and confirmed by the authority of the council of Trent. Now, that we may not be at a loſs what they mean by contrition, the ſaid council hath given us a definition of it; *That it is grief of mind*

mind for ſin committed, and a deteſtation of it, together with a purpoſe to ſin no more. So that whoſoever is thus contrite, and confeſſeth his ſins to the prieſt, and receives his abſolution, promiſing to perfom the penance enjoined, is actually put into a ſtate of ſalvation from that moment.

This doctrine now, we ſay, is both againſt the ſcripture notion of repentance declared in the text, and in other places, and it is of ill conſequence as to the lives of men.

1. Firſt, It contradicts the ſcripture notion of repentance; for that, as appears both from our text, and abundance of other places, includes in it not only a ſorrow for ſin, and reſolution againſt it, but a forſaking of it alſo: Only *he that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins, ſhall find mercy.* Let a man be never ſo ſorry for his ſins, and purpoſe never ſo heartily to ſin no more, yet if, notwithſtanding, he ſtill continues to purſue the ſame vicious courſes, he is not a true penitent. The word by which the true evangelical ſaving repentance is expreſſed, is μετάνοια, which ſignifies not a tranſient paſſion for having offended God, or only a ſudden purpoſe to change our lives; but it ſignifies an actual change of the mind, and will; a transformation of the whole ſoul from bad principles to good. And where once this change, this transformation is made, there muſt of neceſſity follow a new life, a converſation quite different from that which was led before; a habit of ſuch actions as are agreeable to the laws of God. Godly ſorrow for ſin, which is that which the papiſts mean by contrition, is not repentance, and cannot procure pardon; but it is only a good diſpoſition, a right preparation to repentance. This the apoſtle hath moſt expreſly told us,

when he ſaith, that *Godly ſorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. If then it be the thing that works repentance, it is not repentance itſelf.

2. But ſecondly, this doctrine, That contrition, with confeſſion and abſolution, doth put a man into a ſtate of ſalvation, is not only againſt the ſcriptures, but againſt good life; for it gives any man that believes it, great encouragement to continue in his ſins all his life long, and that upon this account, that it quite puts him off from thinking that there is ever any neceſſity that he ſhould reform his life. According to this doctrine, it is but being ſorry for my ſins at ſome ſolemn times, when I come to confeſſion, and reſolving to do ſo no more; and preſently, upon the prieſt's pronouncing a few words to me, I am abſolved of the guilt of them; I am put into the favour of God, and, if I die that moment, I ſhall be finally ſaved. Well, but what if I do not perform my reſolutions that I then made, but return to my ſins again? Why, it is but my repeating the ſame medicine, being ſorry again, and reſolving again, and taking abſolution again, and then I am as right again as ever I was: and thus, *toties quoties*, as often as I thus repent, ſo often are my ſins forgiven me. And, at my laſt hour, tho' I have all my life continued in my ſins, yet this repentance, and this abſolution, will as certainly paſs me into a right of the favour of God, as if I had never ſo much reformed my life, and lived never ſo innocently and virtuouſly; always excepting the purgatory puniſhments, that I may, without ſatisfactions and indulgences, endure in another life.

But now, upon theſe principles, how can any ſinner, that is in love with his ſins, and deeply engaged

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in a wicked courſe, how can he ever think himſelf obliged to reformation? How ſhall he ever be drawn to enter upon, much leſs to go through, that tedious fatigue of mortification, that intolerable burdenſome buſineſs of forſaking his ſins, ſince the being ſorry for them will do as well? What man would be at that pains, when he can obtain pardon and ſalvation upon ſo much eaſier terms?

But I have hitherto given you the faireſt repreſentation of the Romiſh doctrine of repentance, as to this matter, that the ſtricteſt caſuiſts among them will be concluded by. But, in truth, it is generally thought too ſtrict and ſevere for the ſinners that they have to deal with; and therefore they have yet eaſier conditions for penitents to obtain pardon, than thoſe I have now mention'd. Contrition is too heavy a burden to impoſe upon ſinners; and therefore they have found out a way in which the ſinner ſhall be reconciled to God upon eaſier terms, (ſtill ſuppoſing that he confeſs, and receive abſolution) and that is, by the means of *attrition*, or *imperfect contrition*, as the council of Trent calls it; even this, with the ſacrament of penance, will do the buſineſs. Now what they mean by attrition, we may gather from what we ſaid of contrition; for if contrition be a hatred of ſin, with a reſolution againſt it, then attrition, or imperfect contrition, muſt be an imperfect hatred of ſin, with an imperfect reſolution againſt it. So that whoſoever affirms that attrition, with the prieſt's abſolution, ſhall be available for the procuring juſtification before God, doth affirm, that though a man be not ſo ſorry for his ſins, as he ſhould, nor doth perfectly reſolve againſt them, but only hath ſome imperfect purpoſes to forſake them; yet ſuch a man ſhall, upon this

this ſlight repentance, have his ſins forgiven him by God.

This now, one of us would think, was dangerous doctrine; yet really it is no other than what is profeſſedly taught by as great doctors as any they have; and thoſe not one or two, but abundance, and thoſe not only jeſuitical caſuiſts, but of all other ſorts: nay, books have been publiſhed among them, to ſhew that this is the prevailing authoriz'd doctrine of their divines. It would be endleſs to quote authorities in a matter ſo acknowledg'd as this is. I will, among an heap that is by ſundry authors collected to our hands, give you the words of one of their divines, and he as eminent and learned as any they have. He there ſhews, "That grave men, and famous in their "church, do aſſert, that a penitent having received "the ſacrament of penance, that is, having confeſſed, "and been abſolved, is not bound to ſo much as one "act of contrition, or the love of God, in order to "his reconciliation with God: Nay, allow a man "hath hated God to the laſt act of his life, if he re-"ceives the ſacrament of penance, they deny that it "is neceſſary for him to be contrite for his ſins, or "to love God." This is wild enough, but what follows is more extravagant, and that is this, "That "the excellency of the evangelical ſacraments above "the legal, conſiſts in this, that the goſpel ſacraments "have freed us *á graviſſimo contritionis & dilectionis "Dei jugo*; that is, *They have freed us from the moſt "heavy yoke of contrition, and of the love of God.*"

Is not this wonderfully pious and chriſtian? Are not theſe men excellent guides of ſouls? And is not a ſinner admirably provided for, that puts himſelf under their conduct? And yet this is the doctrine that is

frequently taught by the wiſeſt and graveſt of their divines. But when they are urged with this, it is uſually replied, that this is only the judgment of particular men, and that the whole church ought not to be charged with it, ſince it was never eſtabliſh'd nor decreed by any general council. But how frivolous is this pretence; as if men of their communion, in the buſineſs of their repentance, did always ſtrictly examine the decrees of councils, and did not rather wholly give up themſelves to the government of their ſpiritual guides? We know that all their penitents are managed by their confeſſors; and we can prove, that their confeſſors do inſtil ſuch notions as theſe into their penitents; nay, and do avow to all the world, in their printed books, that they are true. It concerns them therefore to ſhew, that theſe notions and doctrines are diſallow'd and diſcountenanc'd by the pope, or by ſome council. If they can do this, we will no longer lay the fault of their private doctors on their church in general; but this they cannot do. For tho' ſome of the Janſeniſts have appear'd vigorouſly againſt this doctrine we are now talking of, ſtill the pope could never yet be induced to condemn it, or to put a mark of infamy upon it.

But this is not all; whatever ſome of them ſay, that this is not the doctrine of the church, but rather the doctrine of private men; to any one that underſtands a conſequence, it will appear to be a profeſſed eſtabliſhed doctrine of the church, and that by the holy council of Trent itſelf.

For the proof of this, I deſire only that theſe two paſſages may be compared together. In one place, the council determines this, *That attrition or imperfect contrition, though it cannot bring a man to juſtification*

juſtification without the ſacrament of penance, yet it doth diſpoſe men for the obtaining the grace of God by the ſacrament of penance. But now in another place it is decreed, *That all the ſacraments do confer grace on all thoſe who are diſpoſed to receive it.*

Let any one now judge, upon comparing theſe two determinations, whether it doth not neceſſarily follow from hence, That all thoſe that have but imperfect contrition, or bare attrition for their ſins, are, by the ſacrament of penance, put into a ſtate of ſalvation, according to the doctrine of the council of Trent. All ſacraments do confer the grace they are ordain'd for, to all that are rightly diſpoſed. Bare attrition, or imperfect ſorrow for ſin, and imperfect purpoſes againſt it, doth diſpoſe a man to obtain grace by the ſacrament of penance. Both theſe propoſitions are laid down by the council of Trent. What in the world then can follow more neceſſarily than this, That, according to that council, *Attrition, with the ſacrament of penance, doth put a man into a ſtate of grace?*

But is not this a moſt miſchievous doctrine, that a little grief of mind, tho' it do not proceed from the love of God, but merely from the fear of puniſhment, and tho' it be not accompanied with firm and ſtedfaſt reſolutions to forſake our ſins, but only hath in it ſome ſlight purpoſes to live better (nay, it is enough, as the council of Trent ſeems to intimate, that the ſinner at that time when he repents, hath not an actual purpoſe to ſin again) that this, after a vicious life, after repeated acts of ſins, after many habits of it inveterately continued in, ſhould, by the prieſt's pronouncing three or four words, cancel all a man's ſins paſt, and ſo reconcile him to God, that if

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he die that moment, he is ſure at laſt of everlaſting happineſs? What a comfortable doctrine is this to ſinners? How admirably doth it reconcile thoſe two things, which in all other religions have been thought inconſiſtent, the love of ſin, and the love of God? an habit of vice, and a title to eternal happineſs? What wonder is it, that ſo many diſſolute perſons go over to the communion of that church, where pardon, and reconciliation with God, are to be had upon ſuch eaſy conditions? If ſinners gave up themſelves into the boſom of that holy church to be made better, it would be commendable; but the principles taught by them do not ſeem to tend that way; and it is much to be preſumed, that it is not a reformation of life that their proſelytes deſign, when they leave us, but a continuance in their ſins with greater ſecurity and greater comfort than we could promiſe to them in our way. What Zoſimus the pagan hiſtorian maliciouſly ſays of Conſtantine, *viz.* "That he was ſo "great a criminal, that no other religion could give "him any hopes of pardon, and therefore he turned "to chriſtianity, the baptiſmal waters of which "would, with one daſh, waſh away all his ſins," may be truly ſaid, it is to be feared, of many of our converts to the Roman church. The lives that they lead are ſo bad, that ſo long as they continue in that ſtate, no other religion but that of the church of Rome can give them encouragement to hope for ſalvation. But that religion can and doth, by the excellent expedients they have invented for the reſtoring wicked perſons, ſo continuing, to the grace and mercy of God.

Thus have I gone thro' thoſe three principal errors in the doctrine of repentance which the church of

Rome hath introduced; namely, their aſſerting the neceſſity of auricular confeſſion: their aſſerting the neceſſity of ſatisfactions after God hath forgiven ſin, upon which is founded their doctrine of purgatory and indulgences: and laſtly, their holding that contrition or even attrition, by the virtue of the ſacrament of penance, is ſufficient to put any man into a ſtate of ſalvation.

But beſides theſe, there are ſeveral other doctrines relating to this buſineſs of repentance frequently taught in that church, and that without any check or reproof, which it is fit all ſerious perſons, that have a care of their ſouls, ſhould be informed of and cautioned againſt.

I ſhall briefly name two of them: Firſt of all, one poſition generally maintained by the popiſh caſuiſts and confeſſors is, that a man is not bound preſently to repent of a ſin that he is guilty of; no, not tho' it be a mortal ſin. Some time or other they acknowledge, that he is bound to repent of his ſin; but, to do it preſently, upon the commiſſion of the ſin, there is no obligation upon him by the divine law. If he ſo manage his affairs, that his repentance be performed at all, it is enough; and there is no more required of him. It is indeed very true, that the council of Lateran, that council that firſt eſtabliſhed auricular confeſſion, doth oblige all chriſtians to repent once a year at leaſt, and to go to confeſſion, and that is at the ſolemn time of Eaſter. But this, the caſuiſts ſay, is only a law and rule of the church; but we are not tied to it by the law of God. All that we are obliged to by God's law is, to repent in *articulo mortis*, the time when we come to die: and as for the injunction of the church, we ſatisfy that by performing the outward

ward ſolemnity of repentance, the ritual part of it, which conſiſts in confeſſion and coming to the ſacrament. One of their famous doctors voucheth this to be the doctrine both of pope Adrian and cardinal Cajetan; and indeed, to be the ſenſe of all men. But now, is not this a moſt godly doctrine? Doth it not tend mightily to the reformation of all wicked livers? On the contrary, I would know what can give greater encouragement to any man to continue in his evil courſes, than this doctrine doth? You have now committed ſome grievous crime, and it lies heavy upon your conſcience: Why, be not afraid for that; if you will now preſently go and unburden yourſelf by confeſſion, and take up new reſolutions, you may do well, and take a good courſe to ſecure your ſalvation: but yet this you are not bound to. Tho' you are at preſent in a ſtate of enmity to God, yet there is no law ties you to be immediately reconciled; if it be but done at any time before you die, it is enough. Is not this kind of reaſoning extremely tending to licentiouſneſs, and giving encouragement to all ſorts of riots and debaucheries? What can put a more effectual bar to a man's reformation of his manners, than this doctrine does, if it be once believed?

Secondly, what they teach, as to the time of a man's repenting, is not more pernicious to ſouls, than what they teach as to the kind of ſins to be repented of. Their diſtinction of ſins into two ſorts, mortal and venial, is ſufficiently known. Which diſtinction, as they order it, is really an hinderance of repentance; or breeds in every man, that embraceth that diſtinction, ſuch a falſe notion of repentance, that he cannot in reaſon think himſelf obliged to ſet himſelf upon the

the mortifying, and the forſaking ſeveral habits of ſin which he may find himſelf guilty of.

It is true, we do admit of the diſtinction of mortal ſins and venial, in ſome ſenſe. We do, with the ancient fathers, allow, that ſome ſins are of ſuch malignity, or may be committed with ſuch aggravating circumſtances, that one act of them ſhall put a man out of a ſtate of grace: they ſhall be mortal to any man that is guilty of them, unleſs he perform a particular repentance for them. On the other ſide, we ſay, that there are ſome ſins that are conſiſtent with a ſtate of grace, and which the beſt of God's children are ſubject to, and may now and then fall into; yet, if they ſtrive againſt them, if they daily beg pardon for them, theſe ſins ſhall not be imputed to them at the day of judgment: Nay, if they die in them without a particular repentance, yet, if they be good in the main, if they have repented of all their ſins in general, both known and unknown, theſe ſins ſhall do them no miſchief. For ſtill, notwithſtanding theſe ignorances and infirmities, they are within the covenant of grace; and God, for the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, will paſs by and forgive theſe ſins in all thoſe who have, for the main of their lives, lived up to the terms of the goſpel. But yet at the ſame time that we ſay this, we hold likewiſe, that all ſins, in their own nature, and in the rigour of the divine juſtice, are damnable, and deſerve God's wrath and indignation; and that, in all unregenerate men, they are ſo accounted; and that in hell the damned ſuffer the puniſhments as well of their ſmall ſins, as of their great ones. So that no ſin in itſelf is venial; but through the merits of Chriſt, ſome ſins will, even without a particular repentance, find pardon. But

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yet even the moſt venial ſins, the moſt light and inconſiderable offences, if they be indulged, if they be encouraged, if care be not taken of them, but they increaſe and grow ſtrong upon us, and at laſt become habits; in this caſe, we ſay, they are no longer ſins of infirmity, but God will account with us for them, as wilful deliberate ſins. This is the proteſtant doctrine concerning venial and mortal ſins.

But that which the papiſts teach in this matter, is quite another thing. If by their venial ſins, they meant no more than thoſe daily frailties and infirmities that good and virtuous perſons are ſubject to, and which they continually ſtrive againſt, and do their utmoſt endeavour to overcome; if this was their notion, we ſhould not find fault with it: But that which they mean by venial ſins, is quite another thing. They teach, that there is a whole kind of ſins which may claim pardon from God as of right; ſuch as if all of them in the world were put together, could not equal one mortal ſin. They hold them to be ſuch, that if we be never ſo much guilty of them, they cannot put us out of the favour of God; and it is impoſſible that any man, upon account of them, ſhould periſh eternally.

Now, I ſay, what is the natural conſequence of this doctrine, but to make men perfectly careleſs of repenting, as to one whole kind of ſins; and ſuch ſins too, as they are moſt apt and inclinable to fall into every day, and conſequently ought to watch and fortify their minds more particularly againſt them than any others? But by this doctrine, mens conſciences are bid to be at perfect eaſe, and they are not to diſquiet themſelves as to theſe ſmall matters; tho' in a little time theſe venial ſins (no care being taken of them) do grow to a vaſt number, and become a courſe of ha-

habitual ſin: And that, that was a ſin of infirmity at the firſt, for want of repentance and ſtriving againſt it, is grown as wilful and as cuſtomary a ſin, as any the man is guilty of.

The application of all this, and the uſe I deſire it may be put to, is this: That we would none of us take our meaſures of repentance from men, what infallibility ſoever they pretend to, but frame it according to thoſe models that God, by his prophets and apoſtles, and eſpecially by his Son, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, hath given us in the ſcriptures, which are the ſtanding rule by which all mankind are to be guided: That we would not be fond of new inventions, that are contrived for the making the way of ſalvation eaſier than Chriſt hath made it in his holy goſpel: That we would ſtand to thoſe rules and directions that God hath given us concerning repentance, *viz.* A hearty ſorrow for all our ſins, and an humble confeſſion of them to our heavenly Father, and forſaking them henceforward, in the courſe of our lives; upon which terms only we ſhall find mercy. And conſequently, in purſuance of this, that we would not think that we repent truly, when we make a full enumeration of our ſins to our confeſſor, or when we are in a pang of ſorrow for our vileneſs and many miſcarriages, or even when we make the moſt ſolemn and ſevere reſolutions to live better; unleſs, by the fruits of our lives, we ſhew that thoſe reſolutions were effectual. Much leſs ſhould we put off our repentance to futurity, and think it ſufficient that, in our laſt hour, we do our endeavour to reconcile ourſelves to God; but preſently, as ſoon as ever we find ourſelves guilty of any offence, ſhould humbly and ſorrowfully beg pardon, and uſe all thoſe means that God hath appointed for reconciliation.

And

And far be it from us, in this buſineſs of repentance, to make ſuch a difference of ſins that we are guilty of, as to think that ſome may be ſafely admitted by us, without fear of the divine vengeance, tho' others will prove damnable. For we are to ſtrive againſt all, remembering that every ſin, indulged and continued in, may prove fatal and damnable to us.

Laſtly, let us, in this affair of repentance, ſtick to Solomon's precept; which, as it ſufficiently directs us to the truth, ſo it ſufficiently gives us a caveat againſt all thoſe errors by which we may be impoſed upon in this affair, *viz.* *That he only who confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins, ſhall find mercy.*

SERMON X.

Abuſes and corruptions of the church of Rome, in the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper. Firſt, in their private maſſes, or prieſt's receiving alone. Secondly, in their denial of the cup to the laity.

1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo deliver'd to you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betray'd, took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new-teſtament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

MANY abuſes, at the time of writing this epiſtle, were crept into the church of Corinth, in the matter of the holy communion; many diſorders they were guilty of, when they met together, in the receiving of it. Theſe

Theſe abuſes and diſorders the apoſtle here complains of, and endeavours to reform. The method he takes for that purpoſe, is to ſet before their eyes the primitive inſtitution of that ſacrament; the ends for which our Lord appointed that myſtery; and the manner in which his diſciples were partakers of it. This he propoſes to them as a pattern for them to follow, or a teſt whereby they might try their own practices in this matter, whether they were allowable or not.

This is the full ſcope and deſign of theſe words I have read unto you; *I have received of the Lord that which I alſo deliver'd unto you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night that he was betray'd, took bread*, &c. As if he had ſaid, conſider well, whether theſe tumults and diſorders, which I hear are committed among you when you come to receive the Lord's Supper, do ſuit with that account I formerly gave you of the ends and inſtitution of it? Do your practices correſpond with the doctrine I deliver'd to you concerning it? And yet I deliver'd nothing but what I had receiv'd before of the Lord himſelf. My doctrines about the ſacrament were no fancies or inventions of my own, but what our Saviour taught and practiſed. Hither therefore you are to look back; by this rule you are to be tried, whether your preſent practices be good or bad, be to be approv'd or condemn'd; and if you be found guilty, according to this rule, you are to reform them.

After this manner doth the apoſtle's reaſoning proceed: And the great point that I gather from it is this, That in all the ordinances and appointments of chriſtianity (ſuch as the ſacraments are) the rule and meaſure by which all ſucceeding churches are to ſquare their doctrine and practice, is the original inſtitution of our Lord, and the uſage of the apoſtles: And when any

abuſes

abuſes or corruptions happen in a church, as to theſe matters, they are to be reformed by that primitive pattern.

It is true, every thing that we find in ſcripture, practis'd by our Saviour or his apoſtles, in thoſe parts of chriſtian worſhip we are ſpeaking of, doth not preciſely oblige all churches. There are many circumſtances in the receiving the ſacrament; for inſtance (as indeed in every action) which do not enter the nature of the action, but are indifferent to it: And ſo may be thus, or may be otherwiſe, without tranſgreſſing the original precept, or inſtitution; for inſtance, the time, the place, the poſture, the number of the perſons joining in the action, and the like. In theſe things, our Saviour's, or the apoſtles practice, is no obliging precedent to us; but we are to be determin'd by the laws of the church, or the cuſtoms of our country. Our Saviour gave the ſacrament in the evening, and after a meal; but this doth not make our receiving it faſting, and in the morning, to be unlawful. He gave it in an upper room; but we may, for all that, ſafely receive it in churches. His giving it to his diſciples ſitting or leaning, will be no bar to our taking it kneeling; no more than his adminiſtring it only to twelve perſons, will make it an abuſe in us to diſpenſe it to a full congregation.

We muſt therefore diſtinguiſh between the eſſentials in religious worſhip, and the external accidents that cloath it; between what enters the nature of the action, and what is merely circumſtantial. It is with reſpect to the former of theſe, we lay down our propoſition, and of which we underſtand it; and being ſo underſtood, it will be always true in all ages of the church, that the rule and compaſs by which every church is to

ſteer

ſteer herſelf, as to her doctrine and practice about the ſacrament, is the original inſtitution of our Lord, and the doctrine and practices of the apoſtles purſuant thereupon, as they are delivered to us in the ſcriptures: And when any particular church ſwerves from this, and teaches or practices things inconſiſtent with it, it is ſo far guilty of abuſes, and ſtands in need of reformation.

And indeed, this rule holds not only in matters of worſhip, but in matters of faith alſo. Whatever is deliver'd in ſcripture by our Saviour and his apoſtles as an article of faith, that is firmly to be believ'd as ſuch by all chriſtians; but whatever is not there deliver'd, how true ſoever it may be in itſelf, yet no church in the world can make it an article of faith, or oblige her ſubjects to believe it as ſuch: And on the other ſide, whatever article of religion any church propoſeth to us, if, upon examination, we find it to claſh with, or be repugnant to the doctrine of the ſcripture deliver'd by our Saviour and his apoſtles, it is ſo far from being a chriſtian doctrine, how infallible ſoever the church that propoſeth it pretends to be, that it is a corruption of chriſtianity, and ought to be rejected by all good chriſtians. In a word, both in matters of faith, and in matters of chriſtian worſhip, the ſcripture is our rule. What the apoſtles have received of our Saviour, and there deliver'd to us, that is the ſtandard both of our belief and our practice. What they taught, we muſt embrace. What they order'd in the worſhip of God, we muſt follow. Whatever is taught or order'd either in matter of faith or ſacrament, inconſiſtent herewith, we muſt reject as an innovation, as an abuſe, as a corruption of the catholic religion.

Thus far I have been led to diſcourſe, by the general reaſon of the apoſtle's argument here uſed; but you ſee

the uſe for which it is brought in the text, is the redreſſing ſome particular abuſes that the Corinthians were guilty of in this matter of the Lord's Supper. To the ſame uſe I ſhall henceforward, in this diſcourſe, apply it.

And in truth, never were there greater abuſes of this ſacrament, than there are at this day; nay, never was any precept, or inſtitution of chriſtianity more perverted to ends contrary to thoſe that were firſt intended in it, than this ordinance of our Lord's. Of this we have notorious inſtances in the preſent avowed doctrine and practices of that church, which would be thought the only catholic and apoſtolical church, and condemns all the other churches in the world as heretical and ſchiſmatical.

It is my deſign here, faithfully to repreſent to you what that church teacheth and practiſeth concerning this ſacrament; and to examine thoſe doctrines and practices by that rule and ſtandard the apoſtle here gives us, *viz.* The primitive inſtitution and practice of our Lord and his apoſtles; and then I will leave it to you to judge, whether they have not horribly ſpoiled and depraved this ſo ſacred and eſſential an ordinance of chriſtianity; whether they have not made it quite another thing than it was at the firſt; nay, whether they have not ſo far diſguis'd and transform'd it, that if a primitive chriſtian of the apoſtles days was to live again, and be preſent at their maſs-ſervice, he would not be ſo far from knowing it to be the ſacred ſupper that our Lord inſtituted, that he would rather take it for ſome paganiſh and idolatrous worſhip.

I now chuſe this argument, becauſe I believe, if you were duly informed of the practices of the church of Rome in this matter, and how widely ſhe hath ſwerved from

from the ſcripture rule, and from the primitive practice of the chriſtian church; and that not only in a circumſtance or two, but in things that touch the very eſſence and nature of the ſacrament; you will be much confirm'd in the proteſtant religion you do profeſs, and be convinc'd what great and demonſtrative reaſons we have why we ought not to join in communion with that church of Rome upon thoſe terms ſhe offereth it.

The ſacrament is not a matter of notion or ſpeculation; we cannot ſay of it, as we are apt to do of other things controverted between us, "It is a ſchool-point, "about which our doctors are not agreed: and till they "be agreed, both ſides may ſafely, without danger of "ſalvation, hold their opinions". No, it is a matter of practice; it is the moſt ſolemn part of the chriſtian worſhip, and we are all infinitely concern'd, that we be right both in our notions and practices about it; even juſt as much concern'd as we are, that we worſhip God in a right way. And therefore if upon trial it be found, that the church of Rome is corrupt, as to this thing; that they perform not this worſhip in the way that Chriſt inſtituted it, and his apoſtles practis'd it, but in a way quite different; nay, perhaps, contrary; I hope we ſhall none of us be very forward to leave our own church, and go over to theirs, whatever other plauſible arguments they offer for the perſuading us.

It is the policy of the Romiſh factors, when they deal with proteſtants, in order to the perverting them, to keep themſelves within general terms and commendations of the catholic church. Many and long harangues they will make of the infallibility of St. Peter, and of the pope's being his ſucceſſor; that there is but one church in which ſalvation is to be had, and that their particular Roman church is that church; and they

can prove it by twenty marks of the true church, antiquity, ſucceſſion, perpetual viſibility, and all the reſt: whereas our church is but of yeſterday's ſtanding, and was never heard of before Luther. While they amuſe their hearers with theſe general encomiums of their church, and invectives againſt ours, all which indeed look very plauſible (tho' yet, in truth, there is nothing in the whole argument but craft and ſophiſtry) it is no wonder if they now and then entangle unwary perſons in their net: for not one of a thouſand is a competent judge of theſe kind of arguments; and they know thoſe that they deal with are not ſo well ſtudied in hiſtory and antiquity, as to be able to confute them. And therefore be their arguments true or falſe, it is but affirming ſtrongly, when they meet with a good-natur'd credulous man, and their work is done: But let us but get them out of theſe generalities, and bring them to particulars, and the caſe will be otherwiſe. Here even an ordinary underſtanding, that is but well acquainted with the ſcripture, will be able to find ſome footing, and will not be ſo eaſily impoſed upon. Nay, as to ſeveral particulars that are controverted between us and the Romaniſts, a proteſtant, that tolerably well underſtands his religion, will not only be able to keep his own ground, as to theſe particulars; but from hence will be able to draw arguments that will overthrow thoſe general doctrines I before mentioned, upon which the adverſary lays his greateſt ſtreſs; and which, if he can once bring us to, he is ſure he hath us. For inſtance, let the particular we pitch upon be the daily ſervice of the Roman church, preſcribed by their maſs-book, and reſorted to every day by all thoſe that have opportunity, and any ſenſe of devotion. The chief part of this daily ſervice is the communion,

munion, or the celebration of the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper. If now it be plainly and demonſtratively proved, that in this their ſervice, as they practiſe it, there are many great errors; many things believed and practiſed, which are utterly inconſiſtent with the doctrine and practice of Chriſt and his apoſtles in this matter; of the guilt of all which, every one that joins in the ſervice is a partaker; I ſay, if a proteſtant be but able to prove this one particular (as certainly every one that competently underſtands their religion, and underſtands ours, may be eaſily able to do) as he will not be eaſily beat off from his hold, as to this particular, by their general arguments; as he will be afraid to communicate in ſuch a worſhip as he believes to be unchriſtian, and will draw ſo great a guilt upon him; ſo he will be able to draw an argument from thence, that will effectually confute all their pretences to antiquity, apoſtolicalneſs, and the reſt of the ſpecious characters that they would ſtamp upon themſelves. For how can that church be an infallible church, which teacheth ſo many errors in the chiefeſt part of the chriſtian worſhip, the holy ſacrament of the Lord's Supper? Or how can that be an apoſtolical church that practiſeth ſo differently, ſo contrarily to the apoſtles of our Lord in this particular? Nay, how can this church be any ſound member of the catholic univerſal church of Chriſt, that hath ſo far departed from the inſtitution of our Saviour, and the uſage of the primitive church in the higheſt myſtery of the chriſtian religion, that ſcarce any one that knows how things were then taught and order'd in this matter, and how they are taught and order'd now, would believe it to be the ſame myſtery?

I have ſaid enough of the uſefulneſs of this argument, I come now to the argument itſelf, that is, to examine

the Romiſh doctrine and practices about the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper, by the rule the apoſtle here lays down; that is, the inſtitution of Chriſt, and the practice and tradition of the apoſtles: And I am confident, upon the whole evidence, it will eaſily appear to every unprejudic'd perſon, that we have not charg'd that church with any thing in this matter, but what is too plain and evident to be denied. I ſhall not inſiſt here on their making ſeven ſacraments, all of equal authority, all equally neceſſary to ſalvation (though not to every particular perſon) all equally conferring grace; whereas, by all we can gather from ſcripture, Chriſt never inſtituted more than two, Baptiſm, and the Lord's Supper. I ſhall not here inſiſt on their having the whole ſervice or office of the ſacrament, in the Latin tongue; a language which none but the learned do underſtand, and which, conſequently, the people are not edified by; which practice, for that reaſon, the apoſtle St. Paul doth ſeverely reprove in the Corinthians. Neither ſhall I inſiſt on the prieſt's muttering the words of conſecration to himſelf, ſo as that none of the congregation ſhall hear what he ſays, tho' it be without any precedent in the ancient times. Neither ſhall I inſiſt on the multitude of maſſes or ſacraments that they allow to be celebrated in the ſame church on the ſame day, and even at the ſame time, at the inſtance of any one that will be at the charge of purchaſing them: The price indeed is not great; no more than twelve-pence a maſs; but what a vile proſtitution of the bleſſed ſacrament this is, every body may judge.

Theſe corruptions and abuſes of the ſacrament in the church of Rome, though they be very great, yet I paſs them over, becauſe they will appear ſmall and inconſiderable, in compariſon of thoſe I come now to mention to you. Five

Five grievous errors and abuſes we charge the church of Rome with in the matter of the ſacrament; ſo grievous, that, if they be found guilty of any one of them, no man that reads the ſcripture, can believe that the ſacrament, as they hold it, can be the ſame with that which our Saviour inſtituted.

1. The firſt is, That whereas in every maſs that is ſaid in that church (and there are every day ſaid many thouſands) they have a communion; yet there is none communicates but the prieſt: So that here there is every day, in the church of Rome, a communion without a communion.

2. Secondly, That at thoſe ſolemn times when they will allow the people to communicate with the prieſt in the holy ſacrament, yet they rob them of half of it; for they will not allow any but the prieſt, who then adminiſters, to receive the cup: So that here, tho' there be a communion, yet it is but half of the communion that our Saviour appointed.

3. Thirdly, They have transform'd the ſacrament into a ſacrifice; whereas the only myſtery of it conſiſts in this, that thereby Chriſt gives his body and blood, in a ſpiritual manner, to be fed upon by us; they have made a new buſineſs of it: for in every ſacrament they pretend to offer up our Saviour's very body and blood as a ſacrifice to God.

4. Fourthly, Whereas in this ſacrament, according to our Saviour's inſtitution, there is a material part, and a ſpiritual; the ſign and the thing ſignified; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily ſuſtenance, and the body and blood of Chriſt for the food of our ſouls; they have quite taken away the former from us: For they will not allow us to believe, that the ſign, the ſymbol, the bread and wine which we think we receive,

and eat and drink, is either ſign or ſymbol, or bread and wine, but the very natural body and blood of Chriſt.

5. Fifthly, and laſtly, This very bread (as we are apt to call it) which we receive and eat, and the wine that the prieſt drinks, they require us to worſhip and adore as very God Almighty; and that under pain of damnation.

Theſe are the points and articles in which we accuſe the church of Rome to have grievouſly corrupted and depraved the chriſtian doctrine and practice in this matter of the ſacrament. And I ſhall now endeavour to make this charge good, by a particular conſideration of each of them.

The firſt abuſe we charge them with is, their private maſſes. In every maſs that is ſaid in the Roman church, there is a communion; for that, as I ſaid, is the principal part of the maſs-ſervice. But now, as that ſervice is daily perform'd among them, the cuſtom is for none but the prieſt to communicate; he conſecrates the ſacrament, and then offers it up to God; and then receives it in both kinds himſelf. But tho' there be a thouſand people preſent at the ſervice; nay, perhaps, ſeveral prieſts among them, yet none are partakers with him; none but he taſtes either the bread or wine: All that they have to do is, only to behold and worſhip. This is the courſe of their daily ſervice; and this every one that hath ever been at maſs may know to be true: And the council of Trent, which hath the ſame authority among them that the ſcriptures have among us, is ſo far from diſowning this practice, that ſhe commends it. I will give it you in the very words of the council: *The holy ſynod doth not condemn thoſe maſſes in which the prieſt only communicates, as if they were private and unlawful, but*

but doth approve of them, and alſo commend them. And one of the canons of that council is expreſſed in theſe words: *Whoſoever affirms, That the maſſes, in which the prieſt only doth ſacramentally communicate, are unlawful, and therefore to be aboliſhed, let him be accurſed.*

I now appeal to any one, who hath read what the goſpels, and what St. Paul ſpeaks of the ſacrament, whether this be not a great abuſe, and whether this practice of theirs be not directly contradictory to the ends and deſign of the ſacrament, as our Saviour inſtituted it. The ſacrament was intended for a communion, as the ſcripture teacheth, and as all chriſtian writers have taught; and the very council of Trent, by the terms which ſhe uſeth of the prieſt's communicating, ſeems to acknowledge: And yet, you ſee, here is a ſacrament adminiſter'd, and yet no communion. The prieſt is indeed ſaid to communicate, but with whom? Why, none but himſelf. It is juſt as good ſenſe as if you ſhould ſay, a man communicates a ſecret, or a myſtery to himſelf.

Our Saviour *bleſſed the bread, and brake it, and gave it to his diſciples. He took the cup*, and bid them *all drink of it.* And this the apoſtles practis'd after him. St. Paul, diſcourſing of this ſacrament, makes it to be the ſign or ſymbol of our union one with another. One of the ends of its inſtitution, according to him, was the joining all chriſtians together in one common body, ſociety, or fraternity. This he expreſly tells us, 1 Cor. x. 17. *We being many, are one bread and one body, becauſe we are all partakers of that one bread*, viz. the ſacramental bread.

If now his doctrine be true, it is impoſſible that any ſacrament, that is ſolemniz'd in the way we have been ſpeaking of, can be a true ſacrament. If one great bu-

ſineſs of the ſacrament be the ſignifying the union of all chriſtians in one body, which ſignification is made by their all partaking of the ſame ſacramental bread; then ſurely that ſervice, in which none partakes of that bread but the prieſt, cannot be thought a true or a juſt ſacrament; becauſe the union and ſociety of chriſtians one with another is not there ſignified or repreſented.

But let us leave the ſcriptures, for it is certain, they are ſo far from favouring the popiſh practice in this matter, that they quite contradict it. Is there any countenance for ſuch kind of private maſſes we are ſpeaking of, where the prieſt communicates alone, from any doctrine of the fathers? from any order of councils? from any practice or uſage of any one chriſtian church for many ages after Chriſt? bating what Chriſt and his apoſtles have deliver'd in this matter, if they can give us one inſtance from antiquity, that any ſuch private maſſes were ever approv'd of, or practiſed, or ſo much as thought of, it will gain ſome credit to their cauſe: but this they cannot give us. The fathers never ſpeak of the ſacrament, but as of a communion; and they ſeverely reprove (as we ought to do now) all thoſe who, when they have opportunity of receiving the ſacrament, do not receive it. The old canons are ſo ſevere againſt thoſe perſons that come to church, and join in the prayers and ſermons, and yet refuſe to partake in the ſacraments, that they declare them excommunicate for their neglect in that point. And there cannot, for the term of ſix hundred years (I believe I might almoſt double the term) any inſtance be given, that any maſs was perform'd in any church, wherein the prieſt only received the ſacrament, and none of the congregation with him. This I affirm ſo confidently, becauſe our proteſtants have conſtantly challeng'd the papiſts

papiſts in all theſe points, and were never yet tolerably anſwer'd.

But we need no further argument againſt this preſent practice of the church of Rome, than the very name by which they call their office of the ſacrament, that is, the *maſs*. If any one will look into their own authors, concerning the notion and ſignification of this term *maſs*, he will, even in them, find this account given of it: that that which we call maſs, or *miſſa* in Latin, is the communion-office; and it was therefore call'd *miſſa* or *maſs* by the ancients, becauſe, when that came to be ſaid, all thoſe who did not intend to partake of the ſacrament, were diſmiſs'd the congregation: the deacon told them they were to be gone. And in the old rituals of the church of Rome, we find there were peculiar officers appointed, whoſe employment it was to turn out of the church all thoſe who did not join in the communion. This, it is certain, is the notion of the old maſs; and from hence it is as certain, that the old Roman church never dreamed of private maſſes, wherein the prieſt alone ſhould communicate, but that ſome devout perſons always communicated with him; otherwiſe, according to this rule, the prieſt muſt have been left all alone by himſelf.

The ſecond great point wherein we accuſe the church of Rome to have departed from Chriſt's inſtitution, and the apoſtolical practice in this buſineſs of the ſacrament, is their denying the cup to the people.

In their daily and ordinary ſacraments we have ſeen, the people do not communicate at all, which is a great abuſe. But this is not all, even at thoſe ſolemn times, when it is the cuſtom for the people to receive the ſacrament (as every one, by their canons, is obliged at leaſt to receive once a year) yet they are not allowed

to

to receive it in both kinds, as our Saviour ordain'd it; but they only receive the bread. None but the prieſt who conſecrates hath the benefit of the cup; and this they hold a point ſo neceſſary, and ſo indiſpenſable, that the council of Conſtance excommunicates all thoſe miniſters that ſhall dare to give the cup of the ſacrament to any lay-man; and, in purſuance of what was then ordain'd, the council of Trent hath made theſe two canons: "If any one ſhall ſay, that all the faithful peo-"ple of Chriſt are bound, by virtue of any command-"ment of God, or as of neceſſity to ſalvation, to re-"ceive the ſacrament of the euchariſt in both kinds, "let him be accurſed—And—If any one ſhall ſay, that "there were not juſt cauſes and reaſons moving the "church to adminiſter the ſacrament to the laity only "under one kind, that of bread; or ſhall ſay, that the "church hath herein erred, let him be accurſed."

This is the law of the church, and their practice is conformable thereto; as every perſon that hath received the ſacrament among them very well knows.

But now let any one, that hath ever read the New-teſtament, be judge between us and them in this matter. *Our Saviour* (as appears by the goſpel) *the ſame night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his diſciples, ſaying, take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you, do this in remembrance of me. Likewiſe he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them, ſaying, drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new-teſtament, which is ſhed for you, for the remiſſion of ſins*, Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. Theſe are the words of the inſtitution; and I appeal to any man living, whether, according to theſe words of the inſtitution, our Lord did not make the cup every whit as neceſſary,

as

as eſſential to his ſacrament of the ſupper, as he made the bread: I am confident none will or can deny it. If there be any difference, he hath laid more ſtreſs upon drinking the cup, than upon eating the bread; for, as to the bread, he only ſaid, *take eat*; which is an indefinite command, and doth not neceſſarily imply, that all there preſent were concern'd in it; it might be ſpoken only to one or more of them. But when he comes to ſpeak of the cup, he ſaith, *Drink ye ALL of it.* By which he gives expreſs command, that all there preſent ſhould be partakers. So that from this difference in the expreſſion, one would be apt to think that he meant to caution his diſciples, the ſucceeding chriſtians, againſt that corruption, which he foreſaw would be introduced into his church, of receiving the ſacrament of the bread without the cup.

It is true, when we urge this inſtitution of our Saviour to the Romaniſts, they have this to ſay for themſelves; "It is no wonder that our Saviour adminiſter'd "the ſacrament in both kinds to his diſciples at the in-"ſtitution, for they were all prieſts that were partakers "of it. The apoſtles who then communicated were "clergymen; and it cannot from hence be concluded, "that the laity have any right to the ſame privilege." They grant indeed, that the apoſtles were lay-men, and repreſented the whole body of chriſtians when they received the bread; but when our Saviour ſaid theſe words, *Hoc facite*, *Do this in remembrance of me*, by thoſe very words he ordain'd them prieſts; and theſe words were ſpoken before he gave them the cup: ſo that when he came to diſpenſe the other part of the ſacrament, that is, the *wine* to them, they then did not receive as lay-men, as the repreſentatives of the people, but as clergymen.

This,

This, tho' it be wonderfully ſubtle, yet it is ſo far taken notice of by the council of Trent, that they have made this canon, "That whoever ſhould ſay, that "Chriſt, when he ſpoke thoſe words, *hoc facite*, Do "this in remembrance of me, did not by thoſe words "ordain his apoſtles to be prieſts, let him be accurſed." But by this curſe, notwithſtanding how dreadful ſoever it be, they will never be able to prove that the apoſtles were more prieſts, more in holy orders, when they drank the wine, than when they eat the bread. If we will conſult the ſcripture and antiquity, we ſhall be convinc'd that they were perfect lay-men in both the actions, and they received no orders or conſecration to the prieſthood till after our Saviour roſe from the dead; for then, when he breath'd upon them (immediately before his aſcenſion into heaven) and ſaid, *Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe ſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whoſe ſoever ſins ye retain, they are retained*, John xx. 22, 23. then they were enter'd into holy orders, and not before. And thus much of the words of the inſtitution of our Lord.

As for the practice of the apoſtles, nothing in the world is clearer than that, in their days, all faithful people received it in both kinds; and it was then thought neceſſary they ſhould do ſo. This is ſufficiently plain, from what St. Paul diſcourſeth to the Corinthians, in the words after my text: *As oft* (ſays he) *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's death till he come.* The ſame St. Paul likewiſe, in the 10th chapter of this epiſtle, ver. 16. gives us this account of the ſacrament: *The cup of bleſſing* (ſays he) *which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt?* If now, this be the

the uſe and the end of thoſe elements of bread and wine in the ſacrament, why then we may ſafely conclude, that the one of them is as eſſential to the ſacrament as the other; and that both are indeed neceſſary. For I would aſk, is not the communion of Chriſt's blood as neceſſary to our ſalvation as the communion of his body? And the communion of the body as that of the blood? Certainly, none will deny it. We are both to eat the fleſh of Chriſt, and to drink his blood, if we mean to have eternal life. If ſo, then it plainly follows, that that which repreſents his blood in the ſacrament, is as neceſſary to be taken, as that which repreſents his body: and ſo *vice verſâ*.

But the papiſts make a very good ſhift to bring themſelves off from this difficulty, by ſaying, That the whole perfect Chriſt, as he lived in the fleſh, is contained in the bread alone: ſo that by receiving the bread, you do virtually receive the cup alſo; for you receive both the body and blood of Chriſt: and whoſoever denies this, is, by the council of Trent, pronounced accurſed. This is that with which they ſtop the mouths of all thoſe diſciples of theirs that deſire ſatisfaction in this buſineſs. But if this be ſo, I would fain know for what purpoſe Chriſt inſtituted the cup? If his diſciples, in receiving the bread, had received both his body and blood, what need was there afterward, that he ſhould give them the cup, and call it the New-teſtament in his blood? Tho' God be never wanting in neceſſaries, yet he never exceeds in ſuperfluities.

Again: If partaking of the bread be the communion both of the body and blood of Chriſt, why ſhould St. Paul, as we have ſeen, make ſuch a diſtinction between the bread and the cup, calling one, *The communion of*

the

the body of Chriſt, and the other, *The communion of his blood?* Laſtly, We would aſk of them, ſince, according to their doctrine, both the body and the blood are received in the bread, what is it which the prieſt, who adminiſters, receives when he takes the cup? (for he always receives in both kinds.) Is it to him, *A communion of the blood of Chriſt*, or is it not? If it be not, for what end doth he receive it? If it be, why then are the people denied it? Certainly, they have as much right to have communion in Chriſt's blood as the prieſts have. If the cup be of no neceſſity, or no advantage to him, he had better let it alone. If it be, then there is all the reaſon in the world, that the people ſhould be ſharers of it as well as he.

The truth is, This practice of theirs of denying the cup to the laity, is every way ſo unchriſtian, ſo unreaſonable, that one would wonder how ever it ſhould obtain among thoſe that call themſelves a chriſtian church. It is, as we have ſeen, directly contrary to the inſtitution of our Saviour, and the doctrine and practice of his apoſtles. And they cannot ſay of this, as they ſay of ſome others of their doctrines, that they have it from the tradition of the church; for they cannot produce one teſtimony out of any one author, that for a thouſand years after Chriſt it was ever known that any church in the world, no not the Roman church herſelf, ever adminiſtred the ſacrament to the people in one kind. And this their own authors do confeſs. One inſtance indeed I ought to except, and that is, the practice of the Manichees, which St. Auguſtine makes mention of. They indeed held, that the cup of the ſacrament was an abominable thing; and for this reaſon, becauſe they taught wine was not of God's creation, but of the devil's. But theſe kind of people (as

all the world knows) were juſtly deteſted as moſt lewd heretics. If the church of Rome will plead this practice of theirs for their precedent, in the matter we charge them with, much good do them with it. But as for others we are ſure they have none.

The firſt eſtabliſhment of this way in the Roman church, and that is the only church in the world wherein it doth yet obtain, was by the council of Conſtance, which I mentioned before: which council was held about 260 years ago: and, by a good token, it is the ſame council by whoſe order the famous John Hus, the forerunner of Luther, was burnt for a heretic, altho' they had before given him ſafe conduct. About 130 years after, that is, about 130 years ago, came the famous council of Trent, wherein popery was formed into that ſhape it now hath, and eſtabliſhed by a law, which it never was before. In this council many tough debates there were, about the buſineſs we are ſpeaking of, whether the people ſhould have the cup reſtored to them or no. The ambaſſadors both of the Emperor and the king of France, and of moſt of the princes of Germany, did very earneſtly, in the name of their ſeveral maſters, petition the council for it; and repreſented to them the dangerous conſequences that would follow, if the laiety were not allowed the ſacrament in both kinds: but with all their arguments they prevailed nothing. So powerful was the pope's faction at that holy ſynod, that againſt the ſtrongeſt reaſons in the world, they carried it for the continuing that ſacrilegious denial of the cup, that the former council had brought in. Nay, ſo zealous was one of the cardinals for this innovation, that he "pro-"teſted that he would never give his conſent that the "people ſhould have a cup of ſuch deadly poiſon ad-

"miniſtred

" miniſtred to them, as that cup was that they de
" fired: and it was better they ſhould die than b
" cured by ſuch a remedy." And what was th
reaſon, think you, for all this heat and zeal againſt ſ
plain an inſtitution of Chriſt? Why truly, the greate
that I could ever find, in all their diſputes, are thes
three:

Firſt, They ſaid thoſe that deſired the cup were diſ-affected perſons, and not true catholics; and if they ſhould condeſcend to them in that particular, they would be ſo far from being ſatisfied, that they would take occaſion, from that eaſineſs of theirs, to make further encroachments upon them, and would be for having their prayers in a known language, and ſuch other things as the Roman church could not allow.

Secondly, They ſaid the clergy were already in ſufficient contempt, and if they ſhould let the people enjoy the ſame privileges in the ſacraments with them, it would make way for a further contempt of them; for it would, in a manner, render the prieſt and the people equal.

Thirdly, They ſaid the church of Rome cannot err. But that church, in the afore-named council of Conſtance, had taken the cup of the ſacrament away from the people, and given good reaſon for it. If therefore they ſhould now grant it to them again, it would be a ſhrewd argument to the heretics, that the church had been before in a miſtake, which to ſuppoſe was intolerable.

Theſe are really the chiefeſt reaſons that they bring for the continuing this practice of half-communion, againſt the earneſt deſires and endeavours of moſt of the princes of Chriſtendom; and are they not, think you, very formidable ones? Do they not ſtrongly and convincingly

convincingly prove the thing they are brought for? Chriſt and his apoſtles gave the ſacrament in both kinds, and ordered it ſhould be ſo done for ever; and all the churches in the world have always practiſed accordingly, except the church of Rome, for ſome 300 years laſt paſt. But now, for fear the laity ſhould be thought of equal dignity with the clergy, and for fear, if what the church of Rome had done once amiſs, and againſt Chriſt's inſtitution, ſhould be amended, that church ſhould ſuffer, as to her credit, and the reputation of her infallibility: for theſe conſiderations, that holy and univerſal ſynod, notwithſtanding Chriſt's inſtitution, notwithſtanding the apoſtles practice, notwithſtanding the uſage of the catholic church for ſo many ages, have order'd, that "none, in a public ſa-"crament, ſhall communicate in both the elements of "the bread and wine, but only the prieſt that conſe-"crates."

This is the plain ſtate of the matter; I have not injur'd them, nor have I abuſed you in repreſenting it. I am ſure I have dealt faithfully, and have ſaid nothing concerning matter of fact, but what I have from their own books. As for my reaſonings, and the conſequences drawn from them, I leave to you, and all conſidering men, to judge of.

And thus much is ſufficient to have ſpoken of theſe two firſt abuſes of the ſacrament in the church of Rome: The reſt I ſhall take another opportunity to ſpeak to.

SER-

SERMON XI.

Concerning the ſacrifice of the Maſs.

The ſecond Sermon on the ſame Text.

1 COR. xi. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo deliver'd to you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betray'd, took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new teſtament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

I HAVE made one diſcourſe upon this text already. The deſign of theſe words, or the end for which they come in here, is the redreſſing ſome abuſes that were in the Corinthian church in the matter of the bleſſed ſacrament of the ſupper.

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The general doctrine which we are to obſerve from them is this, That in all the ordinances and appointments of chriſtianity, particularly that of the ſacrament, the rule and meaſure by which all ſucceeding churches are to ſquare their doctrines and practices is, the original inſtitution of our Lord, and the uſage of the apoſtles; and when any abuſes or corruptions happen in a church, as to theſe matters, by that primitive pattern they are to be reform'd.

The uſe I meant to put this doctrine to, was to enquire and examine by this rule, whether there were not grievous abuſes and corruptions in the church of Rome, not only tolerated, but openly avowed and maintained at this day in the ſervice of the holy communion?

And here I undertook faithfully to repreſent their doctrines and practices in this matter; and, on the other ſide, to repreſent the doctrine and practice of Chriſt and his apoſtles, and to leave you and all unprejudiced people to judge, whether that church hath not departed from the primitive rule, the inſtitution of Chriſt, and the doctrine and practice of the firſt chriſtians; and conſequently, whether ſhe be not guilty of great abuſes and corruptions?

Five grievous errors and abuſes we charged the church of Rome with, in the matter of the ſacrament. The two firſt of them have been conſidered, and largely ſpoken to. I come therefore now to the third general point wherein we accuſe her; and that is, That *of a ſacrament they have made it a ſacrifice:* whereas the deſign of Chriſt, in the inſtitution of it, was to feaſt us at his table, by making us partakers of his body and blood in a ſpiritual manner; they have made the great deſign of it to be the prieſt's feaſting

God

God almighty with the body and blood of his Son, by offering it up to him in ſacrifice.

In ſpeaking to which point, I ſhall do theſe three things:

1. Firſt, Give you an account how far we own the ſervice of the ſacrament to be a ſacrifice.
2. Secondly, Give you a particular account of the doctrine of the church of Rome in this matter, in what ſenſe ſhe holds the ſacrament to be a ſacrifice.
3. Thirdly, Shew you, by ſeveral arguments, the diſagreeableneſs of this doctrine of theirs with the inſtitution of Chriſt, the tenor of the holy ſcriptures, and the reaſon of the thing.

I. Firſt of all, I ſhall acquaint you with the proteſtant doctrine in this matter of the ſacrament.

We do not deny, that the whole office of the communion, as it is ordered in our liturgy, and as it is performed by us, may be called a ſacrifice; nor do we ſcruple to call this ſervice the chriſtian ſacrifice by way of eminency, becauſe we find the ancient fathers frequently ſo ſtiling it: but then, it is only upon theſe three accounts we give it that name; and, upon examination, it will be found, that it was for the ſame reaſon, and in the ſame notions, that it was ſo called by antiquity.

1. Firſt of all, In this ſervice we bring our offerings to God for the uſe of the poor. We do not appear before him empty, but make a preſent to him of our ſubſtance, every one according to his ability; whereby we both acknowledge him for the Lord of the world, and the giver of all the good things we enjoy, and alſo ſhew our charity to our indigent brethren, with which kind of ſacrifice St. Paul tells us, *God is well pleaſed.*

Theſe gifts of ours our church calleth by the name of offerings and oblations; and in the firſt ſolemn prayer in this office, we beg of God to accept thoſe our alms and oblations: and this is the name that both ſcripture and antiquity give to theſe gifts; and theſe oblations make up one great part of that unbloody ſacrifice of chriſtians that the fathers ſo often ſpeak of. It is true, in this we differ from the primitive church, that we now offer to God only in money, but they always, beſides other things, brought bread and wine in kind; which, after it had been ſolemnly preſented to God, the prieſt took a part of it, and, by conſecration, made of it the body and blood of Chriſt, as the language of thoſe times was; which being done, he diſtributed to the people: ſo that the people, having offered to God, were by him feaſted at his table with part of their own offerings, as the manner was in the Jewiſh peace-offerings, with which this chriſtian ſervice hath a great affinity. This was the ancient cuſtom, and in this we at this day differ from them; but the thing wherein we differ is ſo very inconſiderable, and ſo no way relating to the eſſence of the ſacrament; and, withal, the reaſon for altering the cuſtom, and bringing in oblations of money, inſtead of bread and wine, in thoſe times, ſo good, that we ought not to be concerned at the difference, or to wiſh the revival of the old cuſtom: for we offer to God as well as they, and for the ſame purpoſe that they did, and our offerings are as properly a ſacrifice as theirs was.

That which I deſire to infer from hence is this, That, very probably, from this account I have given of the ancient oblations of the chriſtians, we may be able to diſcover whence it was, and upon what grounds, the popiſh ſacrifice of the maſs, wherein they pretend to

to offer the body and blood of Chriſt, came into the church. It plainly came from a miſtake of that ancient ſacrifice, or from not diſtinguiſhing that ſacrifice from that other office of conſecration of the elements, which followed, in order to be performed by the prieſt.

They who introduced the popiſh ſacrifice, knew very well, from hiſtory, that the communicants brought bread and wine as an offering to God when they approached the Lord's table; and that the prieſt did ſolemnly preſent theſe offerings of the people to God upon his altar, as their ſacrifice, and implored his acceptance of them as ſuch. And this ſacrifice they might perhaps, in ſome authors, find to be called the ſacrifice of the body and blood of Chriſt; becauſe, that of thoſe offerings, as I ſaid, it was the cuſtom to take ſome part, and to conſecrate them for the elements, to be received by all faithful chriſtians, as the body and blood of Chriſt. But, not attending to the order of theſe two ſervices, nor minding how they were quite diſtinct the one from the other, they have jumbled them into one and the ſame thing. And whereas before, the people, or the prieſt in their name, only offered to God their alms and oblations, now they make the prieſt to offer the very body and blood of Jeſus Chriſt. It is true, the prieſt always offered the peoples preſent unto God, but not under the notion of Chriſt's body and blood, but under the notion of their oblations of the fruits of the earth. It can never be ſhewed, that after he had once conſecrated them for the body and blood of Chriſt, he offered them in the name of the people, but only diſtributed to them to eat and drink. In the firſt of theſe ſervices, we all grant the people offered a ſacrifice, or the prieſt in their

their name; but when that ſacrifice was offered, and ſet upon God's table, then it was no longer conſidered as a ſacrifice to God, but as a feaſt with which God entertained his gueſts.

2. But ſecondly, That which our church calls the offertory, that is, the oblation of our alms, is not the only ſenſe wherein we acknowledge the ſervice of the holy communion to be a ſacrifice; for, beſides thoſe oblations of our ſubſtance, we do alſo in that ſervice offer up, in the moſt ſolemn manner, our prayers for ourſelves, and our interceſſions for the whole church; our praiſes likewiſe and our thankſgivings; and laſtly, ourſelves, our ſouls and bodies; all theſe we offer up as a ſacrifice to God, and, in the ſenſe of antiquity, they are a main part of the chriſtian ſacrifice.

3. But then thirdly, To compleat the chriſtian ſacrifice, we offer up both the aforeſaid oblations or ſacrifices with a particular regard to that one ſacrifice of Chriſt which he offer'd upon the croſs, and which is now livelily repreſented before our eyes in the ſymbols of bread and wine. That ſacrifice of his we now commemorate before God; we plead the merits and the virtue of it before him, and for the merits, and by the virtue whereof, we have the confidence to offer up unto God the two forenamed ſacrifices, and the confidence to hope they ſhall be accepted. And in this ſenſe we will not deny, that we offer up even Chriſt to his Father; that is, we commemorate to God what his Son hath ſuffered; we repreſent to him the ineſtimable merits of his paſſion; and we deſire God, for the ſake of that, to be at peace with us; to hear our prayers, and accept our oblations. In this ſenſe, I ſay, every proteſtant offers Chriſt to his Father; and it is in this ſenſe that St. Chryſoſtome ſpeaks, when he

ſays, " What then, do we not offer every day? Yes, " we offer, by making a commemoration of his death: " And we do not make another ſacrifice every day, " but always the ſame, or rather a remembrance of " that ſacrifice." And in the ſame ſenſe (ſays Euſebius) " We ſacrifice a remembrance of the great ſa- " crifice."

In theſe three things conſiſted the whole of the chriſtian ſacrifice, as it was held by the primitive fathers: they firſt offer'd to God of their ſubſtance, then they offer'd their prayers and their praiſes, and at the ſame time they commemorated to God the death and ſacrifice of Chriſt, by the merits of which they hoped and they prayed, that both their oblations and themſelves might be accepted.

And theſe three things our church obſerves at this day; for, after we have made our offerings, and begg'd God's acceptance of them, as I ſaid before, we come to beg of God that he would " mercifully accept our " ſacrifice of praiſe and thankſgiving; and we humbly " beſeech him to grant, that, by the merits and death " of his Son Jeſus Chriſt (which we have now com- " memorated) and through faith in his blood, we and " all his whole church may obtain remiſſion of our " ſins, and all other benefits of his paſſion. And we " here preſent unto him ourſelves, our ſouls and bo- " dies, as a lively ſacrifice to him; yet being unwor- " thy, through our manifold ſins, to offer unto him " any ſacrifice, we beſeech him to accept this our " bounden duty and ſervice; not weighing our merits, " but pardoning our offences, through Jeſus Chriſt " our Lord." So that having offered up our ſacrifice of alms, and our ſacrifice of devotions; for the rendering theſe two acceptable, we plead, we commemorate,

morate, before God, the ſacrifice of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

This is the whole of the chriſtian ſacrifice, as the ancients underſtood it; and, if the church of Rome would be content with ſuch a ſacrifice as this, I know none that would oppoſe them. And I am ſure, if they go further, and pretend to any other ſacrifice than this, they go without precedent in antiquity. We offer up our alms; we offer up our prayers, our praiſes, and ourſelves. And all theſe we offer up in the virtue and conſideration of Chriſt's ſacrifice, repreſented before us by way of remembrance or commemoration; nor can it be proved, that the ancients did more than this: this whole ſervice was their chriſtian ſacrifice, and this is ours. But the Romaniſts have invented a new ſacrifice which Chriſt never inſtituted; which the apoſtles never dreamt of; which the primitive chriſtians would have abhorred; and which we, if we will be followers of them, ought never to join in.

II. And this I now come in the ſecond place to declare to you.

For the underſtanding this new myſtery of the ſacrifice of the maſs, you are to know, in the firſt place, That it is the eſtabliſh'd doctrine of the church of Rome, that in the ſacrament of the holy communion, are contained truly, really, and ſubſtantially, not only the true body and blood, but the ſoul and deity of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; that is to ſay, the whole Chriſt; and whoever denies this, or affirms that Chriſt is only in the ſacrament, as in a ſign or a figure; that he is there preſent only by his virtue and efficacy, he is, by the council of Trent, pronounced accurſed. In what manner they thus get Chriſt into their hands, we know not; but it is certain that the prieſt, by ſaying five

words, always doth it; that is, of the bread and wine, makes the very true Chriſt; who being thus made by the words of conſecration, he is, by the prieſt, offered up in ſacrifice to God; and that in as true and proper a ſenſe as he was offered up upon the croſs at Jeruſalem: and this ſacrifice, thus offered by the prieſt, hath the ſame virtue in it that Chriſt's firſt ſacrifice had; that is, it is a propitiation for the ſins of the world; it is an expiatory ſacrifice both for the dead and for the living. One would ſcarce believe, that the church of Rome ſhould teach ſuch doctrines as theſe, much leſs teach them for articles of faith, and require the belief of them by all her ſubjects, under pain of damnation: but yet this really they do, as appears by theſe two canons which the council of Trent hath made about the maſs: "Whoever ſhall ſay, That in the maſs there is not "offered up unto God a true and proper ſacrifice, let "him be accurſed. And again: If any ſhall ſay, That "the ſacrifice of the maſs is only a ſacrifice of praiſe "and thankſgiving, or only a commemoration of the "ſacrifice performed on the croſs, and that it is not "propitiatory, or that it is only profitable to him that "takes it, and ought not to be offered for the living "and the dead, for all manner of ſins, puniſhments, "ſatisfactions, and other neceſſities, whoever affirms "any of theſe things let him be accurſed." This is the Romiſh doctrine concerning the ſacrifice of the maſs. But how groundleſs, how falſe, how abſurd, nay how impious it is, I now come in the third place to ſhew.

III. 1. And firſt of all let it be conſidered, there is no foundation for any ſuch ſacrifice as this of the papiſts, either in the inſtitution of the ſupper by our Lord, or by any other example or doctrine recorded in ſcripture.

ſcripture. It is certain, That all that our Saviour was pleaſed to order in this matter, as far as the four evangeliſts can expreſs it, doth relate to quite another purpoſe, and concludes, that what he himſelf did, and what he ordered us to do, was meant a ſacrament and not a ſacrifice. *He took bread and bleſſed it. He gave it to his diſciples ſaying, do this in remembrance of me. Take, eat, this is my body*, &c. That it ſhould be a ſacrifice wherein either he ſhould offer up himſelf, or command his church to offer him up to God his Father, it appears neither by any word, or any act of his. For, in the inſtitution, both his words and actions are directed immediately to his diſciples. And ſuch ſpecial addreſſes to men, are no likely proof of a ſacrifice to God.

But further; did our Saviour at his firſt ſacrament really offer up himſelf, body, and blood, and life, a true, proper ſacrifice to God, or did he not? If he did not, how ſhall we dare to pretend to offer him up in our ſacraments? If he did, as the papiſts ſay he did, to what purpoſe did he afterwards offer himſelf up upon the croſs? As for the other writers of the New-teſtament, though they have ſometimes occaſion to mention the ſacrament of our Lord, yet not a ſyllable is to be found in them from whence any one can conclude that ever they dreamed it was a ſacrifice. They run in the ſame ſtrain that our Lord doth, of *taking*, *eating*, and *communicating in Chriſt's body and blood*, *and ſhewing forth his death*: But not the leaſt intimation of our ſacrificing Chriſt to God. Nay, St. Paul's whole diſcourſe to the Corinthians about eating of things offered in ſacrifice to idols, which he declares to be unlawful for any chriſtian to do, telling the Corinthians *that they cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the*

table of devils; I ſay, all that diſcourſe is an effectual confutation of the Romiſh ſacrifice. For it plainly ſhews that in St. Paul's notion, the chriſtian communion was not a ſacrifice, but a feaſt upon a ſacrifice, as the idolatrous feaſts were.

One thing there is indeed in the ſcripture, which the papiſts make a great noiſe with, for the proof of their maſs oblation. It is Melchizedeck's bringing forth bread and wine when he met Abraham, after his expedition againſt the five kings. Melchizedeck, ſay they, was the prieſt of the moſt high God, and all chriſtian prieſts are after his order. Now his prieſthood conſiſted in offering up bread and wine, and therefore theirs muſt do ſo too. This is the ſum of the argument. But how little to the purpoſe it is any one will eaſily ſee, who conſiders theſe three things:

(1) Firſt, They can never prove that *Melchizedeck*'s *bringing forth bread and wine*, or as the Latin tranſlation renders it, *Offering bread and wine*, was any act of his prieſtly function. He brought out bread and wine not to offer it up in ſacrifice to God, but to treat and entertain Abraham and his followers, who were wearied with their journey. It was an act of humanity and hoſpitality to thoſe perſons, but not an act of devotion to God.

(2) But Secondly, ſuppoſing that Melchizedeck did, as a prieſt, bring forth this bread and wine, and offered it up in ſacrifice to God, yet what is this to the chriſtian miniſters, unleſs it can be proved that they ſucceed him in his prieſthood; which can never be done? We read indeed, that Chriſt *was a prieſt after the order of Melchizedeck*, but not a word that his miniſters, to the end of the world, are ſo. Nay, the very ſuppoſition that Melchizedeck was a type of Chriſt,

and

and of his prieſthood, will effectually deſtroy all pretences to that prieſthood, in the goſpel miniſters.

(3) But Thirdly, ſuppoſing all the chriſtian clergy are the ſucceſſors of Melchizedeck, (which it is certain none of them are,) yet how doth this impower them to offer up Chriſt to his Father in the communion? Melchizedeck only offered bread and wine; and if the Romiſh prieſts would do no more, we ſhould not have ſo much to ſay againſt them. But they pretend to offer up the very body and blood of Chriſt, which was certainly none of Melchizedeck's offering. And therefore it is as certain that his action gave no countenance to their preſent practices.

2. But Secondly, Let it be conſidered that the Popiſh ſacrifice of Chriſt in the maſs, hath not only no ground or foundation in ſcripture, but is as directly contrary to it, as any thing in the world can be. They pretend every day to offer up Chriſt. The ſcripture flatly ſaith that Chriſt was never to be offered up but once; and the apoſtle in the ninth chapter of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, mainly inſiſts upon this. And herein he placeth the difference between the law and the goſpel, that the ſacrifices of the *law being imperfect, and not able to put away ſin, were every year to be repeated.* Heb. x. 1, 2. But Chriſt, *by once offering up himſelf, hath for ever perfected all thoſe that are ſanctified,* ver. 14. And therefore, he ſaith, *there is no need that he ſhould offer himſelf often, as the high prieſt entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of the ſacrifice, For then,* ſays he, *Chriſt muſt have often ſuffered ſince the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to take away ſins by the ſacrifice of himſelf; and as it is appointed unto men*

once to die, and after that the judgment. So Chriſt was once offered to bear the ſins of many, and to them that look for him ſhall he appear the ſecond time without ſin unto ſalvation, Heb. ix. 25, 26, 27.

Nothing in the world can be plainer than that, according to St. Paul's ſenſe, Chriſt was never to be offered but once. And yet the Popiſh prieſts do offer him a thouſand times every day in the year.

What now have they to ſay for themſelves, for thus apparently contradicting the ſcripture in their daily ſervice? Why truly this is all. They confeſs indeed that Chriſt was never offered more than once, under his own form and figure, and that was upon the croſs, when he ſhed his blood: but that he may be for all this, and is daily offered upon their altars, as really as he was that once upon the croſs, under the form and figure of bread, in the which he ſheds no blood.

But what horrible ſhuffling is this? I will not mention here the nonſenſe and the impiety they are guilty of, in pretending to pen up the whole intire body and blood of Chriſt in one ſingle wafer; nay, in every crumb of that wafer, and expoſing it to be devoured by rats and mice, and every thing elſe that can eat bread: this I ſhall have a further opportunity to talk of. But what monſtrous equivocations, by this diſtinction of theirs, do they make the holy apoſtle to uſe, in what he diſcourſes on this matter? Such equivocations, as even a jeſuit would be aſhamed to be taken in. He ſays, downright, that Chriſt was *never to be offered but once.* Ay, but ſay they, his meaning is, that Chriſt was never to be offered but once in the ſame form and figure: in another form and figure the apoſtle allows that he is offered every day. If this be the apoſtle's meaning, is he not wonderfully ſincere in his affirmations?

firmations? Even juſt as ſincere as I ſhould be, If I ſhould make oath that I never ſaw ſuch a perſon but once in my life; meaning, that I never ſaw him but once in ſuch a garb or habit; but in other habits I cannot deny but that I have ſeen him a thouſand times.

And then further: As to what they ſay, that Chriſt's oblation upon the croſs was a bloody ſacrifice (and of ſuch the apoſtle ſpeaks) but that which they offer in the maſs, is a ſacrifice without blood; it is as impudent a ſhuffle as the other. For, with what face can any Romaniſt ſay, That the ſacrifice of Chriſt, which they offer to God in the maſs-ſervice, is a ſacrifice without blood; when it is the avowed doctrine of their church, that in every crumb of bread, after conſecration, there is not only the whole body of Chriſt, but alſo all his blood; and whoever denies it is, by a canon of the council of Trent, pronounced accurſed? Again: If their ſacrifice of the maſs be a bloodleſs one, with what confidence dare they affirm, that it is a ſacrifice propitiatory for the ſins both of the dead and of the living, when St. Paul, in expreſs words, hath told us, That *without the ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of ſins*, Heb. ix. 22. But I ſhall purſue this no further.

3. In the third place, As this ſacrifice of the maſs is without ſcripture, and againſt ſcripture, ſo it is alſo in the reaſon of the thing, highly injurous to our Lord Jeſus, and to that ſacrifice which he once offered upon the croſs to his Father; for it mightily leſſens and depreciates the value of it; it infinitely takes away from the worth and dignity of that everlaſting ſacrifice that it pretends to repeat or reiterate: for if that firſt and eternal ſacrifice, which Chriſt once offered upon the

croſs, hath all that ſufficiency, and all that efficacy which can be procured by a ſacrifice, nothing is left that can be done by a ſecond. And it is an idle thing to ſay, that the prieſt offers every day a ſacrifice propitiatory for the living and the dead, when all the propitiation was made by the firſt ſacrifice: ſo that at this rate, the maſs-ſervice will be quite out of doors.

But if this ſecond be needful, it muſt be needful upon this account, that it ſupplies ſomething that was wanting in the firſt: In this point, one of the Fathers is very full to our purpoſe. "To be offered (ſaith he) "is a conviction againſt the ſinner; but to be offered "more than once, is an evidence of weakneſs againſt "the oblation itſelf." Either therefore there muſt be no ſecond oblation of Chriſt's body and blood, or, if there ought to be, that ſecond will be a reproach to the infinite value of the firſt; for it is grounded upon this ſuppoſition, that Chriſt's oblation upon the croſs was ſome way or other defective: the way that the Romaniſts take off this argument, is this: They will grant, that Chriſt's one oblation upon the croſs was all-ſufficient for the procuring the pardon of the ſins of the whole world; but they ſay, withal, this oblation is to be every day repeated, in order to the applying to particular perſons the benefits that were at firſt obtained by it.

But how little to the purpoſe is this? The notion of a propitiatory ſacrifice is, that it procures the pardon of all ſins to the offender. If therefore Chriſt's firſt ſacrifice did that, what need is there of another? If the debt be once paid, there is no juſtice that it ſhould be exacted again. According therefore to this their doctrine, they ſhould not have called the ſacrifice of the maſs a propitiatory ſacrifice, but an applicatory

one. But then, for this virtue, that they aſſign to this their ſacrifice, of applying to believers the benefits of Chriſt's firſt ſacrifice, it is the ſtrangeſt one that ever was heard of. The way that the ſcripture propoſeth to us to have the benefits of Chriſt's paſſion applied to us, is, the performance of ſeveral conditions on our parts; that is to ſay, repenting of our ſins, and receiving the holy ſacrament, and living an honeſt, godly, and chriſtian life. But was it ever heard, that the benefit of a ſacrifice was to be applied to men by the means of offering up another ſacrifice? How can any thing be applied to men, by being offered up and applied to God? It is juſt as if we ſhould apply the phyſic, or the ſalves that are preſcribed, not to the patient, or the wounded perſon, but to the phyſician who preſcribes them.

But there is a further myſtery in this applicatory ſacrifice than we would perhaps at firſt think of; and which hath brought as much money into St. Peter's treaſury, as any one trick they have ever made uſe of. The ſacrifice of the maſs, you ſee, is for the applying the merits of Chriſt's firſt ſacrifice to particular perſons. Now this ſacrifice the clergy of Rome have wholly in their own hands, and can either apply it to the benefit of particular perſons, or not apply it, as they pleaſe; for if they do not intend to apply it to this or the other perſon, it is not applied; if they do intend to apply it, then it is. The efficacy of any maſs, for the pardon of the peoples ſins, depends upon the intention of the prieſt. I ſhall give you the words of one of their own authors: "It belongs not, ſaith he, to God alone, "but alſo to the prieſt, to diſtribute the benefit gotten "by the ſacrifice; becauſe, as it is in his power to "determine his intention, whether he will offer for

"this

" this or that man ; ſo it belongs to him to determine " to whom he will communicate what is gotten by " virtue of that ſacrifice." Thomas Aquinas expreſſeth it in fewer words : " The maſs is beneficial to them " to whom the prieſt hath an intention to apply it." This now, being the caſe, it may eaſily be ſuppoſed how convenient it is, for the getting the prieſt's good intentions, to apply the benefit of the ſacrifice that is offered to us, to make good applications to him beforehand.

4. But fourthly and laſtly, The ſacrifice of Chriſt, as it is pretended daily to be offered up in the maſs-ſervice, is not only injurious to Chriſt's one ſacrifice, but alſo barbarous and inhuman. For, in this ſacrifice, the prieſt pretends every day to offer up our Saviour to God his Father, as really as he offered up himſelf upon the croſs. He pretends alſo not to offer him up only as a father may offer up his ſon, or a maſter his ſervant ; but to ſacrifice alſo as an heathen prieſt doth when he ſacrificeth a bull or a ſheep. For this purpoſe, he pretends, by the words of conſecration (which are but five) to bring down Chriſt's body, and ſoul, and deity, and all from the right hand of God in heaven ; and to coop them up in the narrow quantity of a wafer and a little wine, where he is forced to lodge ſo long as that wafer is in being, and cannot in the leaſt help himſelf, or get out of it. To compleat this ſacrifice, the prieſt muſt eat him, or rather ſwallow him down ; for fear that, if he chewed him, ſome crumbs might remain behind, and ſo the whole body be left in his mouth. This done, both the prieſt and the people muſt move God to bleſs them in conſideration of this ſacrifice, in which they have ſo kindly and worthily treated his own Son : and then, laſtly,

both

both prieſt and people do adore what they have thus ſacrificed.

This is a very plain, but true account of the ſacrifice of the maſs; whether our Lord be civilly, or kindly, or humanely uſed herein, I will leave any one to judge.

Theſe things, I dare ſay, which I have repreſented concerning the popiſh ſacrifice, have force enough to convince any unprejudiced perſon, that it is not a ſervice inſtituted by Chriſt; but that it is a great corruption, and abuſe, and depravation of chriſtianity: which was the thing I was obliged to make out.

The fourth abuſe which the papiſts have introduced into the ſacrament is, their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation: but the treating of this I reſerve to the next opportunity.

SER-

SERMON XII.

Concerning Tranſubſtantiation.

The third ſermon on the ſame text.

1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo deliver'd to you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betray'd, took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new-teſtament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

THE deſign I am upon is, to ſhew the grievous corruptions and abuſes that the church of Rome is guilty of in the matter of the holy communion: three of them I have already ſpoke to; a fourth we now come to, and that is this: That whereas in this ſacrament, according to our Saviour's inſtitution, there is a material

terial part, and a ſpiritual; a ſign, and the thing ſignify'd; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily ſuſtenance, and the body and blood of Chriſt, ſignified by them, to be received for the food of our ſouls; they have quite taken away the former from us: for they teach, that immediately, upon ſaying the words of conſecration, that which was bread and wine before, and which, according to the nature of a ſacrament, now comes to be received by us, is no longer bread and wine, but is turned into the very body and blood of Chriſt.

And this is that myſtery which they call tranſubſtantiatſon; a myſtery as unintelligible as the word by which they expreſs it; a myſtery that has always been a bone of contention among themſelves, whenever they came to a particular explication of it; and a myſtery which will for ever be a wall of ſeparation between them and the reſt of mankind, that will not renounce their ſenſe and reaſon.

If we were agreed with the church of Rome in all other points whatſoever, yet ſo long as they impoſed upon us the belief of this ſingle doctrine of tranſubſtantiation as an article of faith, or a condition of their communion, yet we muſt not, we cannot ever, upon theſe terms, come over to them.

What the Romiſh doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is, you will eaſily diſcern by theſe three or four canons, which I ſhall tranſlate word for word, out of the council of Trent, which is their oracle of religion.

"If any one ſhall deny, that in the ſacrament of the "euchariſt there is contained truly, really, and ſub-"ſtantially, the body and blood, together with the "ſoul and divinity of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, &c. let "him be accurſed. Seſſ. 13. Can. 1.

"If

" If any one ſhall ſay, that in the ſacrament there " doth remain the ſubſtance of bread and wine, to- " gether with the body and blood of Chriſt, and " ſhall deny the converſion of the whole ſubſtance of " the bread into the body, and of the whole ſub- " ſtance of the wine into the blood [of Chriſt] the " ſpecies or accidents only of the bread and wine re- " maining, which converſion or change the catholic " church doth moſt aptly call by the name of tran- " ſubſtantiation, let him be accurſed. Can. 2.

" If any ſhall deny, that in the ſacrament the " whole Chriſt is contained in either kind, nay, and " in every part of either kind, when one part is ſe- " parated from another, let him be accurſed. Can 3.

" If any one ſhall ſay, that in the ſacrament, after " the words of conſecration are ſaid, there is not the " body and blood of Chriſt, ſave only in the preſent " uſe of them while they are taken and received, " but that they are not there, either before or after; " or that the true body of Chriſt doth not remain in " the conſecrated wafers that are left, or that are " reſerved after the communion, let him be accurſed." Can. 4.

In theſe four canons the following points are plainly contained, which will give us a full account of their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

Firſt, That after the words of conſecration are ſpoken, there is no bread nor no wine left upon the table.

Secondly, That though there be no bread or wine, yet the accidents, that is, the colour, the ſhape, the bigneſs, the weight, the taſte, and the other qualities of the bread and wine do remain. But neither in the bread, nor in the body of Chriſt, but by themſelves.

Not in the bread, for bread there is none. Not in the body of Chriſt, for they will not allow you to ſay, that the body of Chriſt is round, or ſweet, or white, or the like. So that here is roundneſs without any thing being round, whiteneſs without any thing being white, ſweetneſs without any thing being ſweet.

Thirdly, That in the place of the ſubſtance of bread and wine, by the virtue of five words, there is the ſubſtance of the body and blood of Chriſt, together with his ſoul and divinity; though it is confeſs'd at the ſame time, that Chriſt hath but one body, and that body is in heaven.

Fourthly, That this body and blood, as it is whole in the whole bread and wine, and as both body and blood are whole in the bread alone, ſo it is whole alſo in every crumb of that bread; which doth admirably conſiſt with the notion of a body.

Fifthly, The body of Chriſt is eaten by every communicant both good and bad.

Sixthly, Not only ſo, but this body remains in thoſe wafers that are not eaten; ſo that if, after the ſacrament, a mouſe ſhould happen to come at one of theſe wafers and devour it, it would as really eat the body of Chriſt as any chriſtian. And if one of theſe wafers ſhould be burnt with fire, why then the body of Chriſt would be as really burnt, as it was before eaten. Theſe things cannot be prevented, but by as great a miracle, as the firſt production of the body was.

Seventhly, and laſtly, This change, this converſion of the whole ſubſtance of bread and wine into the whole ſubſtance of the body and blood of Chriſt, together with his ſoul and divinity, is moſt aptly by the catholic church called tranſubſtantiation.

By

By this account I have given you, you may in ſome meaſure diſcover what that hard word means, and what the doctrine of the church of Rome is in this matter.

My buſineſs now ſhould be to ſhew the abſurdity of this doctrine. But I dare ſay, the very ſhewing you what it is, and the naming to you the ſeveral propoſitions contained in it, will be ſufficient to keep every unbiaſs'd perſon from eaſily giving his aſſent to it. He muſt be of a very ſtrong conſtitution, that can ſwallow down and digeſt ſuch pills as are here offered to him, unleſs education, or intereſt, or a blind ſubmiſſion to others, have already made them familiar to him. I dare be bold to ſay, there never was any myſtery in any religion in the world, ſo unintelligible, ſo unconceivable, ſo contradictious, ſo every way both againſt ſenſe and reaſon, as this is. No Jew, no Turk, no Pagan, ſo far as we can learn from hiſtory, ever had in their creeds an article ſo hard to be believed.

If this had been the doctrine of our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles, ſure he had never drawn the world over to his religion: But even his own diſciples would have done, as they of Carpernaum did, when they took his ſaying (John vi.) about *eating his fleſh and drinking his blood* in a literal ſenſe; (juſt as the Romaniſts now do) they would have departed from him.

I ſay not this to put any affront either on the perſons, or the parts, or the honeſty of thoſe that are otherwiſe perſuaded, and do believe as the Roman church teacheth; for I know very well how far education and prejudice, and want of conſideration, may prevail, even upon good men, for the perverting their judgments in the plaineſt matters; eſpecially when

theſe

theſe are backed with this fatal principle, that they are bound, under pain of damnation, to believe as the church believes; and that the more difficult the thing is to be believ'd, the more meritorious is their faith: I ſay, I have nothing to ſay to the men who do believe tranſubſtantiation, nor do I call their chriſtianity into queſtion upon that account; but, for the thing itſelf, it is fit, it is juſt, we ſhould freely reprove it. For certainly, there is no doctrine in the world that either more deſerves to be, or is more capable of being expoſed, and made ridiculous, than this is; and it hath already been ſufficiently made ſo by as many as have attempted it.

If we ſhould purſue thoſe ſeveral propoſitions I have named to their ſeveral conſequences, what a bundle of monſtrous abſurdities, and groſs contradictions, ſhould we find in them! But this method of arguing againſt tranſubſtantiation, I do not think ſo proper in this place, becauſe it would engage us in a diſcourſe too ſubtle for ordinary capacities; and I would, if I could, ſpeak to the meaneſt underſtandings.

Letting paſs therefore the abſurdities and contradictions which follow upon this doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, and which the Romaniſts themſelves will not pretend to anſwer, all of them, I will endeavour theſe three things:

Firſt, To ſhew that the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is ſo far from having any countenance from ſcripture, particularly from the words of Chriſt in the inſtitution [This is my body] which is the great argument the Romaniſts bring for it, and the foundation upon which they build it; that, if there were no other argument againſt it but that, it would from hence be effectually overthrown.

Secondly,

Secondly, To ſhew the danger of this artifice, foraſmuch as it overthrows the evidence of the whole chriſtian religion. If the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation be true, it can never be proved that chriſtianity is true.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the inſufficiency of that plea or apology, which the Romaniſts uſually make for their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, that is, the unaccountableneſs and unconceivableneſs of ſeveral other of the goſpel-doctrines; from whence they conclude, that we ought not to reject the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation upon this account, that it is hard or unintelligible, or ſeemingly contradictious.

Of theſe three points in their order; and the firſt of them will, I believe, take up my whole time at preſent.

The great, if not the only argument of the Romaniſts for tranſubſtantiation is, our Saviour's words, when he inſtituted the ſacrament; which they think to be ſo full and flat for the converſion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Chriſt, that they wonder with what face any proteſtant can deny it. Doth not our Saviour moſt expreſly ſay, when he gave the ſacrament under the form of bread, *Take, eat, this is my body?* Doth he not likewiſe ſay of *the cup*, that it is *his blood?* If ever it was needful that our Saviour ſhould ſpeak plain, and without a figure, one would think it ſhould be then, when he inſtituted this ſo ſolemn, and perpetual, and principal a ſacrament of the chriſtian church. And what can be more plain, than what he hath ſpoken concerning it? Shall we therefore believe Jeſus Chriſt, or ſhall we believe our own carnal reaſon againſt him? No ſure. Every chriſtian ought to ſubmit his reaſon to Chriſt's revela-

tion;

tion; for his reaſon is infinitely fallible; but Chriſt can neither deceive, nor be deceived. *To the word*, therefore, *and to the teſtimony*, which is your own proteſtant rule. Chriſt hath ſaid of the bread, *This is my body:* and therefore certainly it is ſo, whatever our ſenſes or our reaſon can ſuggeſt to the belief of the contrary.

This is the argument; and thus far indeed it proceeds right, That whatever Chriſt ſaid we are to believe, and likewiſe that Chriſt did ſpeak ſufficiently plain to his diſciples, when he inſtituted this holy ſacrament: Neither of theſe will any proteſtant deny. And therefore we do as firmly believe, as we believe any thing, that, when Chriſt ſpake thoſe words, *This is my body*, he ſpake nothing but what was both true, and very plain and obvious unto thoſe to whom he ſpake: But the queſtion is, whether theſe words of his, even in their moſt plain and obvious ſenſe, do make any thing for the Romiſh doctrine of tranſubſtantiation? They ſay they do; we ſay they do not: Here therefore we are to join iſſue.

And here we are ready to prove (if that will ſatisfy) that they not only make nothing for tranſubſtantiation, but quite overthrow it; that the ſenſe that the proteſtants expound them in, is far the plaineſt and eaſieſt, and moſt natural and proper; nay, that it is impoſſible they ſhould be expounded to any other ſenſe. On the contrary, that the Romiſh ſenſe is harſh and forced, and makes our Saviour to talk againſt all the rules of ſpeech.

For the finding out the meaning of our Saviour's propoſition, *This is my body*, the true way will be firſt to fix the ſenſe of the two terms of it; that is to ſay, what he means when he ſays *This*, and what he means by

by *his body*. Now of the ſenſe of theſe two terms, we may be as fully aſcertained from what goes before, and from what follows after, as we can be of the ſenſe of any words in ſcripture.

When we uſe the word *this* in any ſpeech of ours, all the world knows that we do, as with the finger, point to ſomething that is preſent, which we would have thoſe we ſpeak to take notice of. If I have a Bible in my hand, and hold it forth to you, and ſay, *This is the word of God*, would you not all think that I ſpoke of the book which I had in my hand, and ſhewed you? Certainly you would. When our Saviour therefore ſaid to his diſciples, *This is my body*, he meant to ſhew ſomething to them that was preſent; and accordingly we find, that ſomething he had in his hand, and that was bread. The Lord Jeſus, as my text tells you, *after ſupper took bread: He bleſſed* this bread; *he breaks* this bread after he had bleſſed it; *he gives* this bread to his diſciples after he had broken it; he bids them *take and eat* of this bread; and, to oblige them ſo to do, he adds, for *this is my body*. What now, according to the common language of mankind, is it that our Saviour ſaith is his body? Muſt it not of neceſſity be that which he had in his hand, and which he had bleſſed, and broken, and bid them eat of? If any thing can be concluded from words, it muſt be concluded, that when our Saviour ſaith, *This is my body*, he ſpeaks of the bread he had bleſſed and broken; and it is impoſſible the apoſtles ſhould underſtand him otherwiſe.

But if this be not ſufficient to prove that our Saviour, when he ſaid, *This is my body*, ſpoke of the conſecrated bread; let us add the teſtimony of St. Paul, who, ſure, is an infallible interpreter of our Saviour's

Saviour's words. Our Saviour tells his diſciples, that what he had commanded them to eat was *his body:* This is agreed on all hands. If now we will enquire of St. Paul, what it is that is eaten in the holy ſupper, he will inform us plainly, that it is *bread:* Three times he tells us ſo in the verſes immediately following my text. *As often*, ſays he, *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup*, ver. 26. *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup unworthily*, ver. 27. *Let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat this bread and drink this cup*, ver. 28.

Here now is the argument. Our Saviour having conſecrated the bread, bids his diſciples eat of it, telling them, it was his *body*. St. Paul ſaith, that what is eaten in the ſacrament is *bread*. From hence therefore it undeniably follows, that the conſecrated bread is that which our Saviour calls his body; and that, when he ſaith, *This is my body*, it is as much as if he had ſaid, *This bread which I have bleſſed and broken, and which I give you; this bread is my body.*

Having now fixed this as a firm undeniable principle that we may ſafely build upon, let us proceed to the other term in our Saviour's propoſition, *my body*. Now in what ſenſe, or under what conſideration the word *body* is here to be taken, is as clear from our Saviour's words, as the former thing we were ſpeaking of. The Romaniſts do indeed darken the ſenſe of this propoſition, by leaving out half of it; they only ſay, *This is my body*. Here they break of. But the intire ſentence is this: *This is my body given for you*, or, *this is my body broken for you*. From hence we may plainly gather, that our Saviour doth not ſpeak of his body abſolutely, and without a qualification, but under this particular conſideration, *His body*

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as given for us; that is as offered up to God in ſacrifice for us (as the ſcriptures often explain that term) *his body broken for us*; that is, deprived of life for our ſakes.

My plain meaning is, that Chriſt never ſaid ſimply of the bread, *this is my body*; but, *this is my body given*, or *broken for you*: that is, he hath plainly declared, that the bread of the communion is his body, not living, but dead in our ſtead. Which is further confirmed by what Chriſt ſaith of the cup, that it is *the blood of the new covenant ſhed for them*. It was not in any other ſenſe his blood, than as it was *ſhed for the remiſſion of ſins*.

Taking now theſe two things to be ſufficiently proved, and never to be called in queſtion again, I come to the main queſtion between us and the papiſts; and that is, in what ſenſe theſe two terms we have been explaining, are coupled together; or, to ſpeak plainer, in what ſenſe our Saviour ſaid of the conſecrated bread, that it was his dead body. Here begins the great quarrel between them and us; they contend for a direct literal ſenſe; we ſay our Saviour here ſpeaks by a figure; but yet ſuch a figure as is moſt common, and which every one, upon the pronouncing of the words, would eaſily underſtand. They underſtand our Saviour in the ſame ſenſe as they would do one, who (for inſtance) ſhould point to the king's perſon, and ſay, This is the king. We underſtand our Saviour in the ſame ſenſe as we ſhould do one who, having the king's picture in his hand, ſhould ſay, This is the king. The propoſition is the ſame in the mouths of both thoſe perſons; but yet we ſee it hath a quite different ſignification as it is ſpoken by the one, and as it is ſpoken by the other

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Whether of theſe ſenſes come nearer to truth, and to our Saviour's meaning, the literal, or the figurative, theirs, or ours, we are now to examine: But we are to examine them by theſe two principles which we have already proved, and now take for granted; and which, I deſire you would keep in memory, *viz.* That when our Saviour ſaid, *This is my body*, he ſpoke of the bread; and when he ſaid, that the bread was his body, he ſpoke of his body not living, but ſacrificed for our redemption.

Now, taking theſe things along with us, the two following conſequences will be evident:

Firſt of all, that their ſenſe of the words, and by which alone they can prove tranſubſtantiation, is impoſſible, and full of nonſenſe and contradictions.

And ſecondly, that the ſenſe in which the proteſtants underſtand our Saviour's words, is very natural, and eaſy, and agreeable to the common way of ſpeaking; and the only ſenſe in which it was poſſible for the apoſtles, to whom our Lord ſpoke, to underſtand them.

1. Firſt of all, the popiſh gloſs upon theſe words, ſuppoſes things impoſſible and contradictious. For firſt,

(1.) If we take our Saviour's words in the literal ſenſe, that is, in the ſenſe of the Romaniſts, we muſt make him ſpeak to this effect: *This bread which I have bleſſed and broken, and commanded you to eat of, is not bread, but really and truly my dead body; my body ſacrificed for you.* Now I will appeal to you, whether this be not perfect nonſenſe; and whether it was not impoſſible that the diſciples, to whom he ſpoke ſhould thus underſtand him. For what is this, but to make our Saviour ſay and unſay the ſame thing at the ſame

time? He ſpeaks of the bread which he had bleſſed and broken, when he pronounced the word *this*, and they all knew it to be bread; and yet, according to the Romaniſts, he muſt be ſuppoſed to mean that it was *not bread*, but merely his body; for, they ſay, when once it becomes the body of Chriſt, it is no longer bread.

There is nothing in the world, by which they can ſhift off this contradiction, but by ſaying thus (as indeed they do ſay it) that when our Saviour ſpoke the word *this*, that which he had in his hands, or then gave unto them to eat, was indeed *bread*; but, by that time he had finiſhed his ſentence, then it was no longer bread, but his very body.

But this will ſtand them in no ſtead at all. For tho' hereby they may avoid the contradiction, yet they make our Saviour to ſpeak not only againſt the rules of all grammar, but to ſpeak a flat untruth. For he ſays, in the preſent tenſe, this bread *is* my body, when yet, when he begun to ſpeak ſo, the bread was not his body, but only was preſently to be turned into his body. If indeed he had ſaid this bread *will be* my body, as ſoon as I have done ſpeaking theſe words, he then might have been ſuppoſed to have ſpoken ſomething to the purpoſe of tranſubſtantiation. But he ſpeaks in the preſent time *this is*, not, *this will be*; and if they will be bold to change the tenſes, then they keep not to the letter of the words, but have recourſe to a figure: and a figure far more unuſual in theſe kind of ſpeeches, than that we contend is here made uſe of. When therefore our Saviour ſays *this is my body*, his propoſition cannot poſſibly be taken, in a literal ſenſe, without making him either to ſpeak a contradiction. or to ſpeak that which is falſe. Unleſs

leſs it can be made to appear that bread and our Saviour's body, are one and the ſame thing, which no man in the world ever yet aſſerted.

(2.) But ſecondly, let us ſuppoſe, if we can, as they would have us, that when Chriſt had ſaid theſe words, *this is my body*, that which he had in his hands was no longer bread, but became his very body; yet there is this queſtion ſtill behind, how could it be his dead body? His body given, or broken, or ſacrificed, for them?

That our Saviour ſpoke of his body in that condition, and under that conſideration only, I have already ſhewed; and that his diſciples underſtood him ſo, there is no doubt. But if they did, how is it poſſible they ſhould underſtand his words in a literal ſenſe?

Chriſt ſaid to them, *this is my body*. Not my body living, but my body dead and broken for you. His diſciples, who heard theſe words, ſaw and knew that the perſon who ſpoke them was alive, that his body was not yet broken, nor his blood ſhed. What ſhall we ſay? Muſt they underſtand his words literally, as the papiſts would have them underſtood, or no? If they did, they muſt admit of as groſs a contradiction as ever was put upon mankind. They muſt believe that Chriſt's body was both alive, and dead at the ſame time. If they could not believe this, as certainly one of us would think they could not, then it is impoſſible they ſhould take our Saviour's words in a literal ſenſe, *viz.* that the bread he gave them was really and truly, and without any figure, his very dead body.

If they did not take them in a literal ſenſe, then it is certain they underſtood them, in a figurative, which is that which we proteſtants contend for. Which figu-

rative ſenſe, how natural, how eaſy, how unexceptionable it is, and how impoſſible it is that the apoſtles ſhould miſs of it, I come in the next place to ſhew.

2. *Our Saviour in his laſt ſupper with his apoſtles takes bread, and bleſſeth it, and breaketh it,* and diſtributes it to his ſeveral diſciples, and bids them *eat it,* telling them *it was his body, his body broken for them:* when yet all thoſe diſciples knew, and ſaw that he was alive, and preſent with them when he ſpoke thoſe words? If now we had been in their places, how ſhould we have underſtood thoſe words? Certainly not in a literal, but a figurative ſenſe. And what figure ſhould we have thought of beſides that way of ſpeaking whereby we give to the ſign the thing ſignified by the ſign. Now, according to this figure, we ſhould have underſtood the words to this effect, that this bread which he had broken, and bleſſed, did ſhew forth and repreſent his body broken for us, and by our eating of this broken bread, according to his command, we were made partakers of the benefits of his ſacrificed body. No ſenſe in the world can be more eaſy than this. Nay, all things conſidered, it is impoſſible, ſuppoſing the apoſtles to have but common ſenſe and underſtanding, and to mind what they were about, that they ſhould take the words in any other.

(1.) For firſt of all, there is no figure in ſpeech more uſual among mankind in all languages than this whereby we give to the ſign the name of the thing ſignified. Is there any phraſe more common than when we ſhew a picture of any one, to ſay, this is ſuch a perſon: Or when we have a map before us, to ſay this is ſuch, or ſuch a country. When theſe expreſſions are uſed, there is none ſo ſilly as to believe that we mean that piece of painting is really the perſon

perſon of the king, for inſtance, or the queen, whom it repreſents; or that map is really the country of France or Spain, or the like. But we all, even the moſt ſimple of us do underſtand that we give the name of the perſon or thing repreſented, to that which repreſents it.

(2.) But ſecondly, as this is an ordinarary figure in common ſpeech, ſo it is alſo in the language of ſcripture. Innumerable are the paſſages that I might quote both out of the Old and New-teſtament, to ſhew that the ſign or figure of a thing is called by the name of the thing itſelf. Thus for inſtance, when Joſeph expounded Pharoah's dream, *The ſeven fat kine*, ſays he, *are ſeven years. The ſeven ears of corn are ſeven years*, Gen. xli. 26. Thus when Daniel unfolded to Nebuchadnezzar his dreams of the great image, and of the tree: *Thou art this head of gold*, ſays he, and *the tree which thou ſaweſt, it is thou O king*, Dan. ii. 38. chap. iv. ver. 20, 22.

Thus alſo, in the New-teſtament, our Saviour never fails thus to expreſs himſelf upon the like occaſions, as in the parable of the tares. *The field*, ſaith he, Matt. xiii. 38, 39. *is the world: The good ſeed are the children of the kingdom: The tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that ſoweth them is the devil: The harveſt is the end of the world: and the reapers are the angels.* And thus when he ſpeaks of himſelf: *I am the door, I am the vine, I am the good ſhepherd*, John x. 7. xv. 1. x. 14. And thus alſo St. Paul: *That rock was Chriſt*, 1 Cor. x. 4.

By theſe, and a great many other inſtances that might be given, you may be convinced, that when the holy ſcriptures would expreſs the repreſentation of one thing by another, they do not do it in ſuch terms as

theſe, ſuch a thing is the ſign, or the figure, or the repreſentation of ſuch a thing, which is the literal way of expreſſing; but in a much ſhorter manner; ſuch a thing is ſuch a thing, giving to the ſign or the figure the name of the thing which it repreſents or ſignifies. And why, when our Saviour ſaith, *this is my body*, he ſhould not be thought to uſe the ſame ſtyle and expreſſion (eſpecially when all other ſenſes of the phraſe are, as I have ſhewn, full of abſurdities and contradictions) there is no imaginable reaſon to be given.

(3.) But thirdly, that he muſt be ſuppoſed to ſpeak in this language, and that his diſciples ſo underſtood him, there is this further argument, becauſe this was the language that was uſed by the Jews in their ſacraments, and particularly in that ſacrament that the apoſtles had juſt then celebrated.

And indeed, great reaſon there was that they ſhould ſpeak in this ſtile; for if the ſigns may be well called by the name of the things they ſignify (as we have ſhewn they often are) then much more may thoſe ſacred ceremonies, which we term ſacraments, be ſo called; for theſe are more than bare empty ſigns, they are ſeals too; they aſſure to the worthy partakers the truth and reality of thoſe things they repreſent; they effectually communicate the things themſelves.

Two eminent ſacraments God appointed to the Jews, circumciſion and the paſſover; yet to both theſe the holy ſcriptures, and the Jews from them, gave the name of the thing which they ſignified and ſealed. Circumciſion, which was no more than the ſign and ſeal of God's covenant with the Jews, anſwering to our baptiſm, yet is in ſcripture called the covenant itſelf. Thus twice in one chapter, Gen. xvii. 10. 13. God ſaith, *this is my covenant, every male*

male child among you ſhall be circumciſed. And again, *My covenant ſhall be in your fleſh.* Whereas every body knows, that circumciſion was not God's covenant, but the ſign of the covenant, or the ſacrament whereby they entered into covenant.

And then for the other ſacrament, the paſchal-feaſt, from whence our Saviour took his ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, the very name of paſſover, by which it is called, is an inſtance of the figure we are contending for. For the ſacrificed lamb, with which the Jews celebrated this ſacrament, was not the paſſover itſelf, but only a ſign, or memorial of it; for the paſſover was God's actual paſſing over the Iſraelites when he ſlew the Egyptian firſt-born, which was done when they came out of Egypt; yet, you ſee, God himſelf calls this feaſt, *The Lord's paſſover. This is*, ſays he, *the Lord's paſſover*, Exod. xii. 11. And for ever after, every year, this paſchal feaſt was kept (which was as long as the Jewiſh polity laſted) when the lamb was ſet upon the table, the maſter of the houſe ſpoke to his company in theſe words: *This is the paſſover, which we therefore eat, becauſe God paſſed by our houſes in* Egypt. And this form of words, without doubt, our Saviour uſed when he kept this feaſt with his diſciples.

But now all that were preſent, knew that the lamb upon the table was not really the Lord's paſſover, for that was a deliverance that God wrought for them but once, and that many hundreds of years before; but only a memorial of that paſſover; a ſacrament inſtituted for the commemoration of that deliverance, or that paſſover.

Taking now this for granted, as we have ſufficient reaſon, ſince God, in ſcripture, firſt uſed the expreſ-

ſion; and the Jewiſh rituals tell us, that in all ſucceeding paſſovers it was continued, who can doubt but the apoſtles, when they heard our Saviour ſay of the bread, *this is my body*, would naturally be led to underſtand the words in the ſenſe we have been declaring, tho' there was nothing to induce them to it, but what we have juſt now ſaid. The apoſtles, at that time, were celebrating the Jewiſh ſacrament of the paſchal-feaſt, which was a commemoration of a deliverance paſt, *viz.* That great redemption which God had wrought for them from the Egyptian bondage; yet they heard our Saviour ſay of the bread, *this is the bread of affliction which your fathers eat in* Egypt. They heard him ſay of the fleſh upon the table, *this is the Lord's paſſover.* Well, after they had finiſhed this ſacrament, they ſaw our Saviour take of the ſame bread again, and bleſs it as he had done before; (but with a deſign to make a new ſacrament, wherein both they, and all chriſtians after them, ſhould commemorate the death and ſacrifice of the paſcal lamb, of which the other was a type; by which ſacrifice, a deliverance was wrought for all true Iſraelites, to the world's end, out of the ſpiritual bondage of ſin and ſatan.) Having, I ſay, thus *bleſſed the bread*, he bids them *eat of it*; and tells them, *this is his body broken for them.* I dare now appeal to any, whether they would not naturally underſtand this latter expreſſion of his in the ſame ſenſe that they did the former; that is to ſay, that the bread that Chriſt now bleſſed, and broke, was juſt as much his body broken, as the bread they had before eaten was the bread of affliction which their fathers eat in Egypt; or, as the lamb they had before eaten of, was the Lord's paſſover. It has this only difference, that the paſcal lamb was a commemoration

tion of a thing paſt, but the new ſacrament was a commemoration of ſomething that was yet to come; for Chriſt had not then actually broken his body, or ſhed his blood, but was ſuddenly ſo to do: this excepted, the other things are the ſame. And we may as well imagine, that when thoſe words of the Jewiſh ritual, *this is the Lord's paſſover*, were ſpoken, the diſciples underſtood, that juſt then the deſtroying angel was paſſing over the houſes of the Iſraelites, and ſlaying the firſt-born of the Egyptians; as we can imagine, that when our Saviour ſaid, *this is my body broken for you*, they underſtood him of his real natural body, which was not then crucified: And conſequently therefore they took not his expreſſion literally (as the papiſts do) but in the ſame figure that was ſo uſual among them.

I think now that I have fully made out, that Chriſt's words in the inſtitution, *this is my body*, are ſo far from making any thing for the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, that they do effectually overthrow it; and that it is impoſſible that the apoſtles ſhould underſtand them in any other ſenſe than we proteſtants now underſtand them.

I am ſenſible I have been very tedious in this buſineſs; but my endeavours to ſpeak plainly and convincingly have made me ſo—All that I have further to add is this, that altho' we thus interpret our Saviour's words, and tho' thus, without doubt, they who heard him ſpeak did underſtand them; yet are we far from believing or imagining that the bread and wine in the ſacrament are only empty ſigns, or figures, or repreſentations of Chriſt's body and blood. On the contrary, we believe, that altho' they do not change their natures, but ſtill continue bread and wine, yet they do really and effectually convey, to all worthy re-

ceivers, all the benefits and virtues of Chriſt's body that was broken, and of his blood that was ſhed. Tho' his body be in heaven, and not here, yet he is, by his Spirit, really preſent in and with all thoſe who do worthily partake of his ſacrament, in order to the ſtrengthening and refreſhing their ſouls by his influence, as our bodies are ſtrengthened and refreſhed by the bread and wine. And this is all that we mean by the real preſence in the ſacrament.

SERMON XIII.

The usual plea or apology for transubstantiation, answered.

The fourth Sermon on the same text.

1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread:
And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

YOU may easily remember the argument I am upon; it is the shewing (amongst other errors of the church of Rome, in the matter of the holy communion) the great abuse they have put upon us by their doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine, the last time, I largely explained to you from the council of Trent; and gave

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an account, briefly, of the several absurdities and contradictions it contained in it. Having done this, the method that I pitched upon, for shewing the groundlessness of the Romish doctrine of the conversion of the bread and wine of the sacrament into the very body and blood of Christ, was as follows: 'To shew that 'this doctrine of transubstantiation is so far from having any countenance from the words of our Saviour's 'institution, that if there was no other argument 'against it but those words, it would, from thence, 'be effectually overthrown.'

And here it was my business to enquire into the sense of our Saviour's words, *this is my body*. And two things I undertook to prove:

First, that the Romanists, who contend for a literal sense of the words, cannot possibly be in the right. On the contrary, our Saviour's words are so far from making for their doctrine of transubstantiation, that they are an effectual confutation of it.

Secondly, that the sense that the protestants give of those words, is the most natural and easy, tho' it be a figurative one; and such a sense it is, as it cannot be imagined but they who were present when our Saviour spoke the words, must naturally and necessarily hit upon, and understand him in.

Thus far I have already gone. What I further proposed to shew, was, 'The danger of this article of 'transubstantiation, forasmuch as it overthrows the 'evidence of the whole christian religion; and the in-'sufficiency of that plea or apology which the papists 'usually make for this doctrine, from the unaccounta-'bleness and inconceivableness of other gospel-doc-'trines; as that of the trinity and incarnation.'

For

For the two things which are commonly ſaid by the papiſts, not ſo much by way of anſwering our arguments (for that is deſpaired of) as for taking us off from laying ſo great a ſtreſs upon this point, as we are wont to do, are theſe:

Firſt of all, it is inſinuated frequently by them, that whether the church of Rome be right or wrong in this matter, yet it is no great buſineſs. The controverſy is wholly upon a matter of ſpeculation. If they ſhould be miſtaken in their notions, yet what is the evil conſequence? There is nothing of practice depends upon the believing or the not believing their doctrine. I may live as well, and ſerve God as well, tho' I do believe tranſubſtantiation, or do not believe it. And can we think, that a mere ſpeculative point that hath no influence upon our practice, ſhould be worth ſo hotly contending for?

This is one thing that is ſaid. And then another thing that is often thrown upon us, is this: Why are we ſo incredulous about this doctrine of the church? Why do we ſtand ſo much upon the reaſon of the thing? Will we believe nothing but what is fully made out to us by reaſon? Do not we believe abundance of points that are as much above our reaſon as tranſubſtantiation is? If we will not believe articles of faith till we can ſatisfy ourſelves about the reaſonableneſs of every one of them, we muſt be unbelievers all the days of our life. The doctrine of tranſubſtantiation ſeems to be impoſſible, and therefore we reject it; but muſt we not, upon the ſame pretence, reject the doctrine of the trinity, the doctrine of the reſurrection, and ſeveral other articles of faith? For theſe are every whit as impoſſible to our reaſon as their doctrine is.

Theſe

These two things are frequently made use of to beat us from our hold; and indeed, by this artifice, they have done some considerable advantage to their cause, by imposing upon unwary, unthinking men, that this point of transubstantiation is either not so necessary, or not so incredible, as to deserve such a mighty bustle and controversy as we make about it. I think it will not be labour lost to give some answer to them.

1. I begin with the first. It is pretended, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is wholly a speculative point; that our practice is no ways concerned in it; and therefore, tho' it should be an error, yet what great matter is it for a man to be mistaken? Will a pure mistake of a man's understanding, so long as he believes as rightly as he can, be any bar to his salvation at the last day? Why then do we make such a noise and clamour about this doctrine, since it so little concerns our salvation?

(1.) To this I say first of all: suppose it to be merely a speculative error, and no ways to influence upon our practice, yet they themselves have laid so great stress upon it, that we must for ever continue in the same distance from them that we do, unless they would mollify their terms of communion. Be the error ever so small in itself, yet they have made the believing of it an article of faith, and necessary to salvation. It is one of those twelve articles which the pope, by the order of the council of Trent, hath added to the apostles creed. And where-ever that council is received, every clergyman among them is bound not only to subscribe, but to swear his belief of this, and all those other additions; and they do not only swear for themselves, but they are bound by their oath to teach and in-

inſtruct the people in this faith, as that faith without which no man can be ſaved. So that be the matter never ſo ſmall in itſelf, they have made it a great buſineſs. Every man who hath cure of ſouls, takes an oath, that he believes the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation himſelf, as a neceſſary article of the chriſtian faith; and that he will do his utmoſt endeavour, that all thoſe who are under his care ſhould believe ſo likewiſe.

I ſay nothing but what is true, as any man will be convinced who will be at the pains to read over pope Pius the fourth's bull, at the end of the council of Trent, concerning the form of the oath of profeſſion of faith. Is there now any dallying in ſuch a matter as this? Was it ten times of leſs conſequence than it is, yet we ought to be careful of profeſſing this doctrine as an article of faith, when we believe it to be an error; and much more of ſwearing to the belief of it. If it was a matter of no moment before, they have now made it to be a matter of infinite moment; for now no man can be honeſt, or a good chriſtian, who doth not entirely ſwallow this hard pill of tranſubſtantiation: But this is not all.

(2.) For, in the ſecond place, I deſire this may be conſidered: It is ſaid that the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, if it be an error, is only a ſpeculative one, and hath no influence upon practice. This is ſaid; but it is utterly falſe. For no leſs follows upon this belief than the committing of idolatry; and ſure no wiſe man will ſay, but that idolatry is a matter of practice, which it infinitely concerns every chriſtian to avoid. The miſtakes about the preſence of Chriſt's body, if they terminated there, would not be ſo very dangerous; but they draw after them ſuch fearful conſequences, as to matter of divine worſhip, that no

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man who hath the least care of his soul, but will think himself extreamly concerned to inform himself rightly. What can be greater or grosser idolatry in the world, than to worship and perform divine adoration to a piece of bread, as if it was very God Almighty? Yet this practice the doctrine of transubstantiation doth necessarily and unavoidably bring us to. If the consecrated bread be really Christ's body, and his soul and deity be hypostatically united therewith (as they all teach) then I cannot see but that we are bound to perform divine worship to the elements in the sacrament, or to that which in common speech we protestants call bread and wine. And accordingly, in pursuance of this doctrine of transubstantiation, all the papists universally do actually worship the bread and wine in the sacrament as very God Almighty, and are bound by the laws of their religion so to do.

But what now if transubstantiation be an error, in what a case are they then? Are they not the most gross idolaters? such they are, or there hath never been any idolatry in the world. And this they themselves have been so aware of, that one of their jesuits scruples not to affirm, *That, if the doctrine of transubstantiation be not true, the christians of the Roman communion are as great idolaters, in worshiping the host, as the Indians are, in worshiping a red cloth for God Almighty.* If now this be the natural and necessary consequence of transubstantiation, is it such a light matter, that we should take no notice of it, but put it among the disputes and controversies of the schools, which it is not a farthing matter, whether we believe on the one side, or the other?

(3.) But farther yet, I have this in the third place to represent in answer to their suggestion: They say the

the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is but a matter of mere ſpeculation. Be it ſo: But yet this we ſay, it is ſuch a matter of ſpeculation, that if it be once admitted, it will ſhake the very foundations of chriſtianity, and be in danger of overthrowing the evidence of our whole religion. And therefore certainly it is not ſo light, but that great ſtreſs ſhould be laid upon it. And this being one of the principal points I undertook to ſpeak to, I ſhall therefore conſider it more fully.

We ſay, that the very ſuppoſing tranſubſtantiation, deſtroys thoſe grounds upon which we do believe our Saviour's doctrine. If this popiſh tenet be true, it is impoſſible for us ever to be aſſured ourſelves, or to be able to aſſure others, that chriſtianity is true.

This you will ſay is a very heavy charge. But in truth as heavy as it is, it may be very evidently made good. For I would aſk, what are the grounds upon which any of us do believe the chriſtian faith, or would perſuade others to believe it? If we would anſwer reaſonably, we muſt ſay thus: The ground upon which we believe Chriſt's religion, is the teſtimony of the apoſtles, and other honeſt men who lived in the time of Jeſus Chriſt, and heard him publiſh his doctrine, and were witneſſes of the proofs he gave of it: Which doctrine and which proofs they timely committed to writing, and thoſe writings we may ſafely believe, upon the credit and authority of univerſal tradition, to be ſincerely conveyed down to us. This is the direct anſwer to this queſtion: Not denying, in the mean while, that there are a great many other collateral evidences of the truth of chriſtianity, though all depending on the ſame foundation. Well, but upon this queſtion, thus anſwered, there ariſeth another.

another. All the truth of our belief dependeth on the truth of the apostles and other first witnesses their belief. If they were mistaken, then are we too. Now how shall we be sure that they were not imposed upon? All the answer now that can be given to this question is this; It is impossible the apostles and other witnesses of Christ's actions and doctrines, should be mistaken, for they had the evidence of their senses for what they believed, and what they reported to us. They heard Christ with their own ears preaching such doctrines, as we now call the articles of our faith; which doctrines their reason told them were good in themselves, and agreeable to the doctrine of the prophets. They likewise saw with their eyes, the proofs that Christ gave of them, being present at the mighty miracles he wrought: seeing him cast out devils, raise the dead, cure all diseases, and giving all other evidences of a divine power in him. Lastly, after they had seen him put to death, they had all their senses to witness that he was raised again from the dead, and conversed with them for many days.

Here therefore we are to fix the first grounds of our faith, *viz.* upon the evidence of our sense. The apostles, and those other first christians who conveyed our religion down to us, did therefore believe, because they saw, and heard, and felt; and upon the credit of those their senses, they were assured, that what they delivered to posterity, concerning Jesus and his religion, was true. And indeed it is impossible there should be any other evidence than this, for the truth of any divine revelation, let it be of what nature it will; it is into this proposition, *that our senses do not deceive us*, that we are at last to resolve all the arguments we have for the truth or credibility of any revealed

revealed religion. And accordingly we find the arguments of the apoſtles, when they would perſuade men to chriſtianity, always proceed upon this ground. They were eye and *ear-witneſſes of what Jeſus did, and taught*, Luke i. 2, 4. and of his reſurrection from the dead; and therefore they durſt avow to all the world, that he was the Meſſiah. *That which was from the beginning*, ſaith St. John, 1 Ep. i. 1, 5. *that which we have heard, that which we have ſeen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that we declare unto you.*

This now being taken for granted, we thus form our argument. If the ground of our faith be the truth of our ſenſes, whoever teacheth any doctrine that ſuppoſeth our ſenſes may be deceived, doth, ſo far as he teacheth it, overthrow the ground of our faith. Or to put it plainer: If the laſt reaſon for which we believe the truth of the chriſtian doctrine be founded in this propoſition, *That we are to believe our ſenſes*; then that doctrine which ſuppoſes that we are not to believe our ſenſes, doth quite overthrow the reaſon, and ground of our belief. But the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, as it is maintained by the papiſts, doth quite take away the credit of our ſenſes. For it teacheth, That *that* which to all our ſenſes (when we make the beſt uſe of them that is poſſible) appears to be plain bread and wine, as much as any bread and wine in the world can appear to be ſo, is yet really not bread and wine, but a quite different thing, even the body and blood of Chriſt which is in heaven. Upon theſe premiſes, I ſay, that doctrine thus teaching, muſt be concluded to take quite away all the evidence we have for our belief of chriſtianity: If this doctrine be true; then could not the apoſtles or any others be certain,

certain, that what they thought they saw and heard, concerning Jesus Christ, was true; and consequently much less could they persuade others they preached to, that what they taught concerning him was true; and least of all us, who live at this distance of time.

I will make this a little plainer if I can. We will suppose, as the doctors of the Roman church would have us, that transubstantiation was a doctrine of our Saviour's which he taught the apostles, and that they were to teach it to others, as an article of faith. And accordingly we will suppose, that one of them is endeavouring to bring a heathen over to the christian religion. The man, as is but reasonable, first desires to hear an account of this religion he would persuade him to: The apostle thereupon declares to him the articles of the christian faith, and among the rest, he tells him that one article is, That in every christian sacrament of the eucharist, when five words are said by the priest, that which appears to him a small round wafer, and hath, if he may believe his senses, all the other characters of a wafer, yet is not a wafer, but the true natural body and blood of Christ, who was crucified at Jerusalem. The man mightily sticks at this, as he has good reason. "Sir, saith he, this is "a very hard doctrine to be believed. I cannot for "my life distrust the evidence of my senses; I must "believe what I see, and what I taste, and what I "feel; and besides, it is very hard to conceive, in "reason, how the whole proportion of the body of "a man, can be crowded into so small a bulk as a "wafer bears. Ay but, (says the apostle,) Christ who "was truth itself, and could not deceive, nor be de-"ceived, he hath said, that *this is my body*, when he "had given bread to his disciples to eat. You ought

"not

" not therefore to urge your senses against so infallible " an authority. Right (saith the man) if I were con- " vinced that all that Christ said was true, and that " he was an infallible teacher sent from God, I would " do what I could to swallow this hard pill, the belief " that bread is an human body, tho' it be against the " grain of my senses: But how shall I be assured " that your Jesus was so infallible an oracle as you " speak him?"

What now can the preacher, whoever he be, reply to him more than this, That he hath been conversant with our Saviour all the time that he lived; that he saw his actions, and heard his doctrines, and that they were both exactly framed according to the characters that God had before given of the Messiah in the law and in the prophets; that he was present at those testimonies that God, by voices from heaven, gave to his Son Jesus; that he had seen him work such miracles, as were plainly the seal of God to the truth of his mission; and lastly, that he had seen him rise from the dead, and visibly ascend into heaven. These now, I grant, are undeniable arguments of the divinity and truth of our Saviour: But whether will the pagan be satisfied with them? May he not justly thus reply? " Sir, It cannot be denied but that you " speak great and glorious things of your crucified " Jesus; but yet, if you mind, all the arguments " that you bring for the truth of his religion are, " That you have *heard* and *seen* such wonderful " proofs of it. So it seems you lay a great stress up- " on your hearing and seeing, and your other senses, " and you would have me do so too. But may not " I as much trust to my own senses as to yours; " Will you pretend to persuade me, that I should be-

" lieve your ſenſes, when, at the ſame time, you for-
" bid me to believe my own? I am as certain, by
" my eyes, and ſmell, and handling, that what you
" call the body of Chriſt, is no more than a piece
" of bread, as you can be certain, that ever you heard
" a voice from heaven, in atteſtation that Jeſus was
" the Son of God; or, as you can be certain, that
" ever you ſaw him work any miracles; or, as you can
" be certain that ever you heard him ſpeak, or touch-
" ed him, or converſed with him after he roſe from
" the dead. You have no other evidence but your
" ſenſes for the truth of what you would perſuade
" me to, the chriſtian religion: I have the ſame evi-
" dence againſt the truth of what you would perſuade
" me to, the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. If your
" ſenſes may be believed, why may not mine? If
" both our ſenſes may not be believed in one matter,
" then why ſhould they be believed in another?"

This is a very familiar, but a true repreſentation of the caſe: And I would gladly know, how any papiſt in the world, that owns tranſubſtantiation (as every papiſt muſt do) can take off this argument.

The concluſion therefore is, That if tranſubſtantiation be true, it can never be made to appear, that chriſtianity is true; becauſe tranſubſtantiation being ſuppoſed, the credit of our ſenſes is taken away; and yet upon their credit our belief of chriſtianity is founded.

But to this the Romaniſts ſay, That our ſenſes, in the buſineſs of the ſacrament, are noways abuſed or deceiv'd. Whatever is the proper object of our ſenſes, is, in the conſecrated bread, left entire. That which appears to our eyes to be white and round, is really ſo; that which to our taſte appears to have the reliſh

of bread, hath really that reliſh; and ſo of the other objects of our ſenſes. All the miſtake, ſay they, lies here: Our ſenſes repreſent truly, but we, in our minds are apt to form a wrong judgment of the thing that is convey'd under theſe ſenſible qualities. We are not deceived in the objects of our ſenſes, but we may be deceived by the ſubſtances that are convey'd under thoſe objects.

This is all that I know they have to defend themſelves with againſt the argument I have been urging: But in truth, if you will well conſider it, it ſignifies nothing at all to the purpoſe. The queſtion is not, whether there be really ſuch impreſſions made to our outward ſenſes, as we find ourſelves ſenſible of, (for nobody denies) but whether, when ſuch impreſſions are made to our ſenſes, and we uſe our ſenſes, not one ſingly, but all of them together, to try the matter by, and we add our reaſon to boot, and this in a matter that is as much the object of ſenſe as any in the world; I ſay, the queſtion is, whether in this caſe, we may not, by the help of our ſenſes, make a true judgment of the object; or rather, whether we ought not, all things duly examined by our reaſon which our ſenſes offer us, give judgment according to the import of our ſenſes? We ſay, we ought to do ſo. The papiſts ſay, we ought not: But in ſo ſaying, they quite overturn the credit and evidence of all ſenſe; for, at this rate of talking, no man can be aſſured that any thing he ſees, is the thing he takes it to be; or that any thing he taſtes, is the thing he fancieth it; and ſo of the reſt.

But they ſay further to this: It is true, in all other caſes, our ſenſes (eſpecially when we make uſe of all of them, and call our reaſon in to their aſſiſtance) are

are to be believ'd; only there is a particular exception in this case of the consecrated bread and wine, because Christ, who cannot lie, hath pronounc'd them to be his body and blood. But to this we reply, that Christ hath no where pronounc'd so; but his words import directly the contrary, as, I think, we have already sufficiently proved.

2. But I hasten to the other thing which I was to insist upon; and that is, the insufficiency of that plea or apology which the papists usually make for their doctrine of transubstantiation, from the unaccountableness or inconceivableness of several others of our Saviour's doctrines.

Whenever we urge to them the unintelligibleness or contradictions of this their tenet, that which they think to stop our mouths with, is; "Will you be a "christian, or will you not? If you will, then you "must be led by faith, and not by sense. You must "believe what God hath said, and not what your own "carnal, fallible reason suggests: You cannot con- "ceive how that which appears bread, should be the "true real body of Christ which is in heaven. Why, "can you conceive any better of many of the my- "steries of christianity? Is not the incarnation of "our Saviour, the manner how God and man can be "one person, every whit as great and as unaccount- "able a secret? Are you not as much at a loss, when "you endeavour to reconcile the doctrine of the "blessed trinity with your reason, as you are in the "case you object against us? Can you, or any man "living, give a more intelligible account of that my- "stery, than we can do of transubstantiation? Will "not the notion of three in one, be eternally as great "a contradiction, as it is that the body of Christ

"should

" ſhould be in a thouſand places at once? Leave " therefore theſe ſenſual hankerings after reaſon, and " believe whatever God ſaith is true, how impoſſible " ſoever it ſeems to us: It is not our buſineſs to diſ- " pute God's aſſertions, but to ſubmit to them."

This, that they ſay, is very plauſibly ſaid; and it is likely, with unwary perſons, may take very much, and hath often done ſo.

But if you will conſider well, you will find, there is no force at all in what is ſaid; becauſe there is a vaſt difference and diſparity between the things we charge them with, and the things that they offer for the defence of themſelves.

Three things I ſhall offer, whereby that difference will manifeſtly appear:

(1.) Firſt of all, The doctrine of the trinity, how unconceivable ſoever it be, as likewiſe the doctrine of our Saviour's incarnation, are plainly and evidently deliver'd in the ſcripture; ſo plainly, that we muſt deny the authority of the book of God, if we deny them: Nay, they are the very firſt principles of chriſtianity, and ſet down in the New-teſtament as ſuch; and none, from Chriſt's time to this, ever rejected them, but were declared heretics for ſo doing. Whereas the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation hath no foundation in ſcripture, nay, is directly contrary to the words of our Saviour, as I hope I have ſufficiently proved; and not only ſo, but it may be fully proved, it was doctrine never known to the fathers for the firſt eight hundred years after Chriſt; but it is a perfect novelty, firſt eſtabliſh'd by the council of Lateran; and, by a very good token, it was the ſame council that firſt decreed the lawfulneſs of depoſing of princes, and abſolving ſubjects from their allegiance,

in the caſe of hereſy: So that it is plain impudence in any, to name the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation with thoſe other chriſtian doctrines, as to the authority of them, from the book of God.

(2.) But ſecondly, There is this further difference between the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, and the doctrine of the trinity, and the incarnation of our Lord, and ſuch other myſteries of the goſpel, that the firſt is plainly a matter that falls under our ſenſes, but the other do not ſo: This ought extremely much to be regarded in this preſent controverſy. It is no wonder, we cannot fathom the depth of the trinity, becauſe God is an infinite being, and our underſtandings are all finite. We may as reaſonably think, that we can contain the ocean in a ſmall ſhell, as think we can fully and adequately comprehend the nature of God in our ſhallow underſtandings. The object is wonderfully too great for us; and therefore if we will be too curious and inquiſitive, it is but juſt, and unavoidably neceſſary, that we be entangled in our own nets. God only knows his own nature, and we know no more of it than he reveals to us, and therefore we have no more to do, but to believe what we are certain he hath reveal'd; and tho' we cannot comprehend what he hath reveal'd concerning himſelf, nor reconcile it with our ſhallow reaſon, yet we know our reaſon was never given us for that purpoſe; we know there is an infinite diſproportion between the object, and the faculty that is to be employ'd about it. And tho' we cannot ſatisfy ourſelves in our ſpeculations concerning God, yet we have ſtrong reaſon to believe, that our being not ſatisfy'd doth rather proceed from the greatneſs of the object, and the weak-

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neſs of our underſtanding, than from any inconſiſtency or unintelligibleneſs of the thing itſelf.

But then, when we come to talk of tranſubſtantiation, it is quite another matter. This is a juſt object of ſenſe, nay, an object of all the five ſenſes. If we can judge of any thing in the world, ſure we may judge of the reality of a piece of bread, or of a cup of wine. All things that fall under our ſenſes, we are certainly competent judges of, or elſe we muſt ſuſpend all manner of determination concerning things to the end of the world.

Never therefore let the Romaniſts ſay, that our not being able to give an account of the trinity, is as much an argument againſt the truth of that myſtery, as our not being able to give an account of tranſubſtantiation is an argument againſt that: for you ſee there is an infinite diſparity in the inſtances. If the nature of God fell under our ſenſes, and was to be judged of by them, as all bodies are, they would argue right, and we would not conteſt againſt them; but it is quite otherwiſe, God is infinite, and we are finite, and therefore he exceeds our meaſure. But the things that are expoſed to our ſenſes, they are like ourſelves, and our ſenſes were given us for the making judgments about them; and it would be an affront to the God that gave us them, to think, that when we uſed them as well as we could, we ſhould be perpetually miſtaken, as to ſome certain objects.

(3.) But thirdly, and laſtly; The papiſts ſet the trinity againſt tranſubſtantiation, and they ſay, we may as well refuſe the one doctrine as the other, becauſe they are equally againſt reaſon, equally contradictious. But we utterly deny it, and that upon this account: We can ſhew a great many impoſſibilities and contra-

dictions in their doctrine of transubstantiation, evident to every one that hath common sense and reason; and such impossibilities and contradictions as they can noways get clear from, with all the subtilties, and niceties, and distinctions, that they can make use of. But they cannot shew us any such contradictions or impossibilities in the doctrine of the trinity, how mysterious and incomprehensible soever it be counted; no, nor in any other mystery of christianity. There is no doctrine reveal'd by Christ, but we can, from scripture, give such an account of it, as that no man can charge any absurdity upon it. Tho' we cannot prove it by reason, yet when God hath once reveal'd it, we can prove that it is not contrary to reason.

And there is this thing further to be said about the trinity, That how intricate and contradictious soever the papists account it, yet it was owned and believed, for some ages, by the wisest and most learned of the heathens themselves; and even by several of those who were the bittereſt enemies of christianity. Now these, sure, did not think it against reason, but highly agreeable to it. But the Romanists cannot say this, nor any thing like it, for their doctrine of transubstantiation; for I dare challenge any of them to shew when, or where, either Pagan, or Turk, or Jew, or any one but a papist, did, or could believe so absurd a doctrine, as that of transubstantiation is.

But I have said enough upon this point. *Consider what you have heard*, &c.

SER-

SERMON XIV.

Concerning the adoration of the Hoſt.

The fifth ſermon on the ſame text.

1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo deliver'd to you, that the Lord Jeſus, the ſame night in which he was betray'd, took bread:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

After the ſame manner alſo he took the cup, when he had ſupped, ſaying, This cup is the new-teſtament in my blood: This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

THAT patience of yours which hath been exerciſed with ſeveral diſcourſes upon this text, I beg once more to try, and then I ſhall diſmiſs the argument.

That which led me to pitch upon this text was, the fair occaſion it gave me to enquire into the doctrine and practices of the preſent Roman

church, touching the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper: For here we have a ſtanding rule laid down, by which the practice and doctrines of all churches in this matter are to be tried; and that is, the agreeableneſs or conformity of them to what the apoſtles firſt *received of the Lord*, and afterwards *deliver'd* unto the church. By this teſt, we meant to examine the preſent Roman-catholic tenets about the ſacrament; and thoſe we have already examined, I doubt not, appear to you ſo far from being apoſtolical, or catholic, or chriſtian, that they are quite contrary; that is to ſay, are ſuch as were not only not known to the apoſtles, and the primitive churches of Chriſt, for ſeveral ages, but perfectly contradictory to what was then taught and practiſed; and beſides that, are againſt all ſenſe and reaſon.

Becauſe we are a going off from this argument, I think it not amiſs to repeat to you the ſeveral points or articles, wherein we accuſed that church, for having departed from the rule of the text in the matter of the ſacrament; for they are really worth your remembering.

Ten errors, or abuſes of this kind, we charge them with; the firſt five of which I only named; the other five I propoſed fully to diſcourſe of: The firſt five were theſe:

1. Firſt, Their making of ſeven ſacraments neceſſary to ſalvation, altho' not all neceſſary to every one; whereas it can never be proved, that our Saviour ordained any more than two.

2. Secondly, Their having the whole ſervice or office of the ſacraments in the Latin tongue, which is a language which the people do not underſtand, and by which, conſequently, they cannot be edified;

which

which kind of practice is, for that reaſon, condemn'd by St. Paul in the fourteenth chapter of his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians.

3. Thirdly, The prieſt's muttering the words of conſecration to himſelf, ſo as that none of the congregation ſhall hear what he ſays, which is without any precedent in ancient times.

4. Fourthly, Their making the prieſt's good intentions neceſſary to the efficacy of the ſacrament; tho' he pronounce the words of conſecration, yet if he intend not to make the body and blood of Chriſt in his mind, there is no body and blood made, and conſequently all they who come to receive, tho' they come never ſo worthily and devoutly diſpoſed, yet they receive no ſacrament.

5. Fifthly, The multitude of ſacraments or maſſes which they allow to be perform'd in the ſame church, on the ſame day, nay, even at the ſame time; and this at the inſtance of any one who will be at the charge of buying them. The price indeed is not much more than twelve-pence a maſs; but yet it is a vile diſhonour to, and proſtitution of, the bleſſed ſacrament of our Lord's body and blood.

Tho' theſe errors and corruptions be great enough, yet the other five, which I was to inſiſt upon more largely, do far exceed them; ſo grievous they are, that if the church of Rome be found guilty of any one of them, no man, that reads the ſcripture, can believe that the ſacrament, as they hold it, can be the ſame with that which our Saviour inſtituted.

Firſt, The firſt is, That whereas in every maſs that is ſaid in their church (and there are every day ſaid many thouſands) they have a ſacrament, yet there is none communicates but the prieſt; ſo that here is

every day, in the church of Rome, a communion without a communion.

Secondly, That at thoſe ſolemn times, when they will allow the people to communicate with the prieſt in the holy ſacrament, yet they rob them of half of it; for they will not allow any but the prieſt, who then adminiſters, to receive the cup: ſo that here, tho' there be a communion, yet it is but half of that communion which our Saviour inſtituted.

Thirdly, They have transformed the ſacrament into a ſacrifice; whereas the only myſtery of it conſiſts in this, that therein Chriſt gives his body and blood, in a ſpiritual manner, to be fed upon by us; they have made a new buſineſs of it: for in every ſacrament they pretend to offer up to God our Saviour's very body and blood, as a true, proper ſacrifice, propitiatory both for the quick and the dead.

Fourthly, Whereas in this ſacrament, according to our Saviour's inſtitution, there is a material part, and a ſpiritual; the ſign, and the thing ſignified; the bread and wine to be received for our bodily ſuſtenance, and the body and blood of Chriſt for the food of our ſouls; they have quite taken away the former from us by their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, which teacheth, that after the prieſt hath ſaid the words of conſecration, there is no bread and wine left upon the table, and conſequently none can be received, but all is turned into the very body and blood of Chriſt.

Fifthly and laſtly, This bread, as we are apt to call it, which we receive and eat, they require us to worſhip and adore as God Almighty.

Theſe are the points and articles in which we accuſe the church of Rome to have grievouſly corrupted and

and depraved the chriſtian doctrine and practice in this matter of the ſacrament.

As to the four firſt of them, I have already fully made good this charge againſt them; the laſt article only remains to be ſpoken to, which I ſhall now diſcuſs as briefly and plainly as I can.

The thing then to be enquired into at this time, is, Whether the Romaniſts do not grievouſly amiſs, and are guilty of a great corruption in this matter of the ſacrament, when they give to it the very ſame worſhip that they give to God, and oblige all thoſe who ſhall be of their communion to do the ſame: that this is their practice, no papiſt can deny; that it is the doctrine and command of their church, the council of Trent, to which all their prieſts are ſworn, will, in expreſs words, aſſure us. After that council hath declared, that 'by the words of conſecration, the whole 'ſubſtance of the bread is turned into the ſubſtance 'of the body of Chriſt, and the whole ſubſtance o 'the wine into the ſubſtance of the blood of Chriſt,' there immediately follow theſe words: "It is not "therefore to be doubted, but that all faithful chri-"ſtians ſhould give to this ſacrament, that higheſt "worſhip called *latria*, which is due to the true "God." And whoever affirms otherwiſe, is, by a canon of that council, pronounced accurſed: and this worſhip they give to the hoſt (*viz.* that round wafer which we call the conſecrated bread) not only at the time of receiving it, but whenever it is carried about in the ſtreets. All paſſengers are then, by the ſound of a bell, admoniſhed to pay their worſhip and devotions to the God that paſſeth by them; and if any one ſhall ſay, that this practice of theirs is not allow-

able, and that they are idolatrous for ſo doing, he is, in the ſame canon, pronounced accurſed.

That this kind of worſhip was ever commanded by our Saviour, or given by the apoſtles, or allowed, or ſo much as thought on in their times; as there is nothing in the holy ſcriptures from whence we may gather it; ſo there is enough in the nature and contrivance of chriſtianity, from whence we may plainly gather the contrary.

Can it be imagined, that *that* religion which doth ſo ſtrictly forbid all idolatry, ſhould ſet up a God to be worſhipped, which, to all thoſe that will believe their ſenſes, can appear no other than an idol, becauſe it appears a mere piece of bread: that the catholic church of Chriſt, in the firſt ages, had no ſuch kind of worſhip, beſides a profound ſilence of antiquity concerning it, we have this undeniable argument, that the pagans would have hit them in the teeth with it, whenever the chriſtians reproved them for their many idols; but yet we do not find that ever they did. All the writings of the chriſtian fathers are full of invectives againſt the heathen idolatry; they take a great deal of pains to expoſe the folly and ridiculouſneſs of giving divine worſhip to that which is but a creature, or that which is the work of man's hands. Now, with what face could they do this, if, at the ſame time, they were guilty of the ſame practices? And tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe that they could ſatisfy themſelves with this, that what the pagans worſhipped were real idols and falſe gods, but that which they worſhipped was Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God, under the form of bread; I ſay, tho' they might ſatisfy themſelves with this, yet how would this ſatisfy the pagans? By them a piece of bread would ſtill be thought

a piece of bread, however the chriſtians fanſied it was God Almighty. If a pagan had been preſent at one of the chriſtian aſſemblies, and at the elevation of the hoſt had ſeen them all fall down, and worſhip, would not he think that he had every jot as great reaſon to reproach them for adoring a piece of bread, as they had to reproach him for adoring the ſun, or moon, or this, or the other image? Minutius Fælix, a very early chriſtian writer, thus harangues it againſt the pagans: "They, ſays he, melt braſs; they caſt it, "they ſet it up, and faſten it: it is yet no god. "They poliſh it, they adorn it; neither is it yet a "god: but, ſee now, they conſecrate it, they pray "to it; then as ſoon as men will have it to be a god, "it is a god."

Whether now might not the pagans return the ſame raillery upon the chriſtians, ſuppoſing the practice we are now ſpeaking againſt, had been then in uſe? I give it you in the words of one of our divines, who hath moſt excellently handled this ſubject: "Chri- "ſtians ſow wheat, they cut, gather, and threſh it: "it is no Chriſt yet. They grind it, they ſift it, they "bake it: it is ſtill but a wafer. They ſet it upon "an altar, they lift it up, they croſs it ſeveral times; "it is yet the ſame it was before. At laſt, they ſpeak "the five words of conſecration; preſently ten mira- "cles break forth; and among an hundred wafers, "which are all like to one another, that which the "prieſt pleaſeth to think upon, that is their Saviour." If the practice of the pagans in this matter was abſurd and ridiculous, then every jot as much was the practice of the chriſtians; and might have been as eaſily made appear ſo, and would, without doubt, have been

made ſo, had there ever been any ſuch practice among them.

But let the practice of the church be as it will, let us come to the reaſon of the thing. Were the old pagans idolaters or not? If they were not, why do the ſcriptures, and all the chriſtian writers, charge them for ſuch? If they were, it will be eaſy to be proved, that they who adore the hoſt, in the bleſſed ſacrament, with the worſhip that is due to God only, are idolaters as much as they.

1. For firſt of all, Is it idolatry to worſhip that for God which is not God? If it be not idolatry, then the pagans were not idolaters: if it be, then they who worſhip the hoſt with divine worſhip are idolaters; for certainly that which they worſhip is not God, is not our Saviour, but a wafer, a piece of bread. It is true, they do not think ſo, but we are certain that it is nothing elſe; as certain as we can be of any thing that our ſenſes, backed with the beſt reaſon, can report to us. If ignorance and miſtake in this matter will excuſe the Romaniſts, it will alſo excuſe the Pagans; if it did not excuſe theſe, neither will excuſe it thoſe.

2. But ſecondly, All the marks that the holy ſcriptures give of an idol, and all the reproaches that they caſt upon it, do as well befit the popiſh god in the ſacrament, and as heavily light upon it, as upon any thing that was worſhipped by the pagans. It is a mark of a pagan idol, and the reproach of it, that it was made by men; (as both the Old and New-teſtament are very large and rhetorical in ſetting forth.) Why is not the god in the maſs as much the work of mens hands, as any of the pagan idols were? Nay, bating the labour of the baker, there was none of them

ever made ſo quickly, and ſo eaſily as this; for the ſpeaking but five words, with intention, doth it.

Let none be offended that I ſay the papiſts *make* their god, or *make* the body and blood of Chriſt; for it is their own word, and ſolemnly uſed by them. And one of the greateſt reaſons for which they deny our orders and prieſthood in the proteſtant church is, becauſe we in our ordinations do not pretend to confer a power of *making the body of Chriſt.*

Furthermore the penmen of the holy ſcripture think they do not only ſufficiently deſcribe and mark out an idol, but ſufficiently alſo expoſe it to laughter and contempt, by reckoning up the many outrages and ill uſages it is obnoxious to, and from which it cannot reſcue itſelf. Now there is no abuſe of this kind which they reckon up, but the god which the papiſts adore in the maſs, is every whit as liable to it, as any pagan idol in the world. If Laban be laughed at for ſerving *gods which were ſtolen away*, Gen. xxxi. 30. are not they we ſpeak of as much to be laughed at whoſe god hath been ſo often in danger of thieves, that they have been forced to make a law for the ſecure cuſtody of him? If the Egyptians are reproached by Iſaiah for worſhipping that, which at the long run, *is caſt to the moles, and to the bats*, chap. ii. 20. are not the Romaniſts as much to be reproached for worſhipping that which is never ſafe from the teeth of the rats and the mice, if they can poſſibly get at it? If it be thought a ſufficient argument to prove the gods of the Babylonians to be idols, becauſe they were forced to be *carried upon mens ſhoulders, otherwiſe they could not help themſelves*; and in the time of calamity they were liable to be *carried away captive*; which argument the prophet Iſaiah (ch. iv. 6.) makes uſe of; will it not be

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as good an argument to prove the hoſt in the maſs to be an idol, becauſe it is expoſed to the very ſame inconveniencies? They do frequently carry it about from place to place, to be worſhipped; and there is one day in the year ſet apart to that purpoſe, *viz. Corpus Chriſti* day. And if we may believe hiſtory, this hoſt hath likewiſe been taken from the chriſtians, and carried away captive by the mahometans.

In a word, there are many other characters by which the holy ſcriptures do deſcribe and reproach the pagan idols; which if you will take the pains to ſearch out and apply to the popiſh god in the maſs, you will find that they fit the one every whit as exactly as the other.

3. But there is a further thing to be ſaid againſt the popiſh hoſt, that will prove it in a more true ſenſe to be an idol or a falſe god, than any pagan idol can be proved to be ſo. The pagans (as the ſcripture chargeth them) made gods of *ſilver and gold, and wood and ſtone*; yet they were never ſo ſottiſh as to think, that after they had formed thoſe materials into ſuch or ſuch figures or images, and by conſecration had made them gods; I ſay, they were never ſo ſottiſh to think that by this conſecration the ſilver, or the gold, or the wood, or the ſtone, loſt their ſubſtances, and were turned into the true nature and ſubſtance of that god they meant to worſhip: No; they always believed that what they thus conſecrated, ſtill retained its former nature and ſubſtance, and was no more an object of their worſhip, than either as it was a repreſentation of the god that they worſhipped, or as by their conſecration it became a receptacle, a houſe, a habitation in which the god would peculiarly vouchſafe his preſence. And if this idol or material god of theirs happened

pened to be ſtolen, or to be broken and defaced, or to be carried away captive: they were far from thinking that the object of their adoration, the god whom they worſhipped, was either ſtolen or defaced, or carried away captive: ſuch affronts might be done to his image, or to the houſe in which he dwelt, but he himſelf was infinitely above all thoſe injuries. This was the pagan notion. But thoſe we are now dealing with, go upon quite other principles; ſuch principles indeed as by a pagan would have been thought to have reflected mightily upon the honour of God, and have done a great injury to him. They teach, that that bread of which the prieſt by conſecration makes Chriſt Jeſus, (and ſo an object of divine worſhip) is turned into the very ſubſtance of that which they adore. By conſecration it is not made a repreſentation of our Saviour, or a lodge or habitation for him to reſide in, but it is turned into his very ſelf; ſo that it is no longer bread, but "the very body of Chriſt, together "with his ſoul and divinity united to it," (as the council of Trent expreſſeth it.) So that if this, which they make the object of their worſhip (we call it a wafer, they call it "the very body of Chriſt, together "with the ſoul and deity,") I ſay, if this ſhould happen to be ſtolen or burnt, or trodden under foot, or devoured by vermin; they muſt needs ſay, and they cannot deny, that it is their very Saviour, the perſon whom they worſhip, that ſuffers all theſe abuſes and indignities. The heatheniſh gods had power enough to free themſelves from thoſe extremities, for it was but quitting their images or receptacles, and they were at liberty. But the God of the chriſtians is in a far worſe condition, if the Romiſh doctrine be true; for according to them, after once the words of conſecration

tion are ſaid, and thereby the ſubſtance of the bread turned into the body and blood of Chriſt, it will continue ſo to be as long as any of the accidents of bread remain; that is to ſay, ſo long as any of us would think it to be bread.

4. But this is not all; let me add this in the fourth and laſt place. Though all the reproaches that are caſt upon the pagan idols in ſcripture, do fall heavily upon the chriſtian idol in the maſs (if we may ſo call it,) yet there is one thing for which that worſhip may be reproached, and which caſts ſuch an indignation upon the perſon they pretend to adore, that never the like affront was put by any pagan upon his god. The Romaniſts have no ſooner of the bread made a Saviour, and worſhipped him, but they preſently eat him. Moſt commonly indeed the prieſt only eats Jeſus Chriſt, but at the moſt ſolemn times, the people alſo eat him as well as he. Was there ever ſuch a thing as this heard of in any pagan country? Did ever any man make a god, conſecrate him, and then adore him with the ſame religious worſhip that he gives to the ſupream God, and then within a minute ſwallow him down, and ſend him to thoſe places which are not fit to be named? But yet this is done in the church of Rome every day.

Cicero, who was a pagan himſelf, and knew as much of the pagan religion as any man living did, tells us expreſly in his book *de natura deorum*, lib. 3. 'that among all the religions of his time, there 'was no man of any ſo fooliſh and ſottiſh, as to pre-'tend to eat his God. The Egyptians that worſhipped the vileſt of creatures, yet never dared to eat what they had once worſhipped. But yet this affront the Romaniſts put upon the adorable Jeſus our God and

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Saviour, every time that his ſacrament is celebrated. And I dare ſay they are the firſt that ever put this affront upon the deity.

What ſhall we ſay to theſe things? I dare appeal to the moſt rude barbarian in the world, whether, according to all the reaſon he hath, and all the natural principles he is acted by, whether it be not as high an injury as he can poſſibly offer to God, either to eat and devour that which he ſincerely believes to be God, and hath juſt before worſhipped; or to worſhip and adore that for the ſupream God Almighty that he thinks he may the next moment lawfully eat. Either therefore let the papiſts ceaſe worſhipping and adoring the ſacrament, or let them ceaſe eating of it. If they will do both theſe againſt ſenſe and reaſon, againſt ſcripture, againſt the practice of the firſt and beſt chriſtians, we have nothing to ſay to them when they would perſuade us to become catholics, but what a mahometan ſaid long ago: If there be no other catholic chriſtian religion but this, it is better for us to continue pagans, or heretics, or what you will. *Cum chriſtiani adorant quod comedunt* (ſaid that Arabian Averroes) *ſit anima mea cum philoſophis.* Dionyſ. Carthuſ. in 4. diſt. 10. art. 1. If there be no catholics, no chriſtians, but 'thoſe who will adore that which they eat, it is better 'for us to be of the religion of the philoſophers.'

But to all this charge of idolatry in the matter of the adoration of the hoſt, the Roman-catholics think it a ſufficient anſwer to ſay this: They do not worſhip any thing, nor pretend to worſhip any thing in the ſacrament but Jeſus Chriſt, the Saviour of the world; who, as being God-man, is a true and proper object of the higheſt worſhip. Do we think they would give adoration to the hoſt, if they thought it was nothing

thing but a piece of bread? No, they would abhor it as much as we. But being that they are convinced that Jeſus Chriſt is there under the form of bread, and that after the words of conſecration ſaid there is no bread left, but the ſubſtance of it is turned into the ſubſtance of the body of Chriſt, they think it not only lawful, but their duty to give divine worſhip to Jeſus Chriſt thus inviſibly preſent.

This is the ſum of what they ſay for themſelves. And I think they ſay nothing but what is true. They would not perform adoration to the hoſt, but that they verily believe it is the real body of Jeſus Chriſt, and not a mere wafer, as we call it. And I think likewiſe, that if it was certain and evident that Chriſt's real body, together with his ſoul and divinity, as they phraſe it; that is to ſay, the whole Chriſt, God and man, was preſent at the table, under the form of a wafer, they ought to worſhip him as ſuch.

But then, having granted this, it makes nothing to their purpoſe; this doth not excuſe them from the guilt of idolatry, as we charge it upon: For we have theſe two things to urge them with:

Firſt of all, by their own confeſſion, all that can render the worſhip of the hoſt lawful, or ſo much as excuſable, is, the tranſubſtantiation that is made of the bread into the body of Chriſt. But now, tho' the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation ſhould prove true, yet, for all this, they are not certain that every time they give adoration to the hoſt, they are free from idolatry.

But ſecondly, if tranſubſtantiation be not true, but the bread they worſhip be ſtill bread, then they are as much idolaters as ever the pagans were.

1. Firſt of all, tho' the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation ſhould be true, yet they are not certain that every time they worſhip the hoſt, they are free from idolatry.

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My argument is this: The doctrine of tranſubſtantiation may be true, and yet the bread and wine may not, in every ſacrament, be turned into the body and blood of Chriſt. When they are not ſo turned, they who worſhip them, worſhip a mere creature, and conſequently are guilty of idolatry; but when they are, and when they are not ſo turned, no man living can certainly know: For you are to underſtand, that according to the Romiſh doctrine, the bread and wine are never tranſubſtantiated, but by a due conſecration. Now, to the making a due conſecration, there are required three things; 'That the words of the conſecration be right ſpoken; that he who ſpeaks them 'be a lawful prieſt; and, laſtly, that the prieſt ſpeak 'the words with intention and meaning to make the 'body of Chriſt of the bread.' If any one of theſe three requiſites be wanting, there is no conſecration; and if no conſecration, no tranſubſtantiation; and if no tranſubſtantiation, no body of Chriſt; and if no body of Chriſt, then what is worſhipped is no more than a piece of bread; and conſequently the worſhip that is given to it is idolatrous.

Now I will appeal to any man, whether he can at any time, much leſs at all times when he is preſent at maſs, and worſhips the hoſt; whether, I ſay, he can be aſſured that the conſecration is performed with all theſe three requiſites? Can he be aſſured that the prieſt ſpeaks the words right? It is impoſſible for him, becauſe he cannot hear them pronounced; for, by the laws of that church, the prieſt is to ſpeak the words in a low voice; ſo that the ſtanders-by cannot diſtinctly apprehend him. Can he be aſſured, in the ſecond place, that the man who conſecrates is a true prieſt? Before he be certain of this, he muſt know

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an hundred things, which it is impoſſible for him to know; as for inſtance, that he was lawfully baptiſed, that is to ſay, with the right form of baptiſm, and with an intention to be baptiſed: As alſo, that he had his orders from a true biſhop, and that that biſhop obſerved the eſſential form of ordination, and did intend likewiſe to make him a prieſt; and to make this biſhop a true biſhop, he muſt likewiſe have been baptiſed, and ordained with a due form, and with due intention, and by him that had due power: And, to know him that did it to have due power, the ſame queſtion muſt be aſked concerning thoſe that ordained him; and ſo backward, even up to the apoſtles times. But then, in the third place, for the intention of the prieſt that conſecrates the ſacrament, how can any man be aſſured of that? Suppoſe the prieſt to be an atheiſt, or an infidel, as there have been many? Suppoſe the prieſt himſelf do not believe tranſubſtantiation, as there have been ſeveral come over to us, who have declared that even while they continued in that communion, they did not believe it; if either of theſe caſes happen, how is it poſſible that the prieſt can ſincerely mean, or intend to make the true real body of Chriſt, when he ſpeaks the words of conſecration?

Theſe now being the conditions that are required to the making a tranſubſtantiation of the bread and wine; and theſe conditions no man living being able to aſcertain himſelf, whether the prieſt hath them or no, it remains, that it is impoſſible for any man, at any time to know, whether, at the ſacrament, he worſhippeth Chriſt Jeſus, or a piece of bread; tho' yet, in the main, the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation be true. Methinks, if there was no other conſideration but this, it ought to abate the zeal of the Roman-

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catholics for their adoration of the hoſt, ſince, even according to their own principles, they cannot be certain that they do not commit idolatry every time they practiſe it.

2. But ſecondly, all this is upon ſuppoſition of the truth of the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation. But now if tranſubſtantiation ſhould prove a mere fiction; if the bread and wine in the ſacrament, notwithſtanding the moſt authentic conſecration, ſhould ſtill continue mere bread and wine, and the body of Chriſt ſtill continue in heaven, at the right hand of God, and not come down hither at all; what will become of the Roman-catholics then? If this ſhould be true, are they not idolaters, with a witneſs? Do they not, in this caſe, give divine worſhip to a mere creature? And a contemptible creature too? Certainly they do; and, according to the notion that the ſcripture gives of idolatry, and that hath hitherto paſſed in the church, they are idolaters for ſo doing: Nor is it we only that ſay ſo, but ſeveral of the papiſts themſelves have acknowledged as much. I will give you an inſtance in Coſter, one of the Jeſuits, who affirms, 'That if their church be miſtaken in the doc-'trine of tranſubſtantiation, they do, *ipſo facto*, ſtand 'guilty of ſuch a piece of idolatry, as never was be-'fore ſeen or known in the world.' "For the er-"rors of thoſe (ſays he) were more tolerable, who "worſhipped ſome golden or ſilver ſtatue, or ſome "image of any other materials, for their god, as the "heathens worſhipped their gods; or a red cloth hung "upon the top of a ſpear, as is reported of the Lap-"landers; or ſome live animal, as of old the Egyptians "did; than of thoſe who worſhip a bit of bread, as "hitherto the chriſtians have done all over the world "for ſo many years, if the doctrine of tranſubſtantia-

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" tion be not true." So that it ſeems, by the confeſſion of papiſts themſelves, if the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation be not true, they are very great idolaters. But, this being granted, we will make bold to add a ſecond propoſition: We are as certain, as we can be of any thing, that the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is not, cannot be true; ſince it is againſt all evidence of ſenſe and reaſon. And now let any one that will, from theſe two propoſitions, make the concluſion.

But, I muſt needs ſay, there is a more plauſible apology to be made for the Roman-catholics in this matter; and I will not be ſo unjuſt to them as to paſs it by in ſilence: It is this: " They, indeed, do believe " tranſubſtantiation; that is, that the body of Chriſt " is indeed preſent in the ſacrament, inſtead of the " ſubſtance of the bread; and, upon that account, " they give divine worſhip to it. But, ſuppoſe they " were miſtaken in their belief, which they hope they " are not; their good meaning and intention would " excuſe them from the crime of idolatry: They in- " tend no worſhip but to Jeſus, who is a due object of " their adoration. If, thro' ignorance, they give " that worſhip to a creature, thinking it to be Chriſt " Jeſus; it is true, they are miſtaken; but they are " no more idolaters upon account of that miſtake, " than a man would be thought a traitor to his prince, " that, through ignorance, ſhould take a courtier for " the king; and kneel down, and pay ſuch reſpect to " that courtier, as were only due to the king."

It is true, this is very plauſibly ſaid. But I deſire leave briefly to repreſent theſe two things, which will ſhew how inſufficient this plea is for the clearing the Roman-catholics in the matter we are now ſpeaking of.

(1.)

(1.) Firſt of all, this that they ſay for the freeing themſelves from idolatry in the maſs-worſhip, goes upon a perfectly falſe foundation. It ſuppoſeth, that idolatry cannot be committed where a man is miſtaken in the object that he adores. If a man, intending to worſhip the ſupreme God, ſhould give divine worſhip to that which is not God, yet thinking it to be God, this worſhip of his is not idolatrous; for tho' he be miſtaken in the object, yet his meaning is right and good: This is the ground they proceed upon.

But it is not only falſe, but the direct contrary is true. There was never any ſerious idolatry in the world, but it was founded upon a miſtake; no ſerious man was ever ſo fooliſh as to adore that for the ſupreme God, which he did not believe to be the ſupreme God; but yet if that which he worſhipped was not God, he was for all his good meaning, counted an idolater. I do not think, that the Roman-catholics do more ſtedfaſtly believe at this day, that the conſecrated bread is the true body of Chriſt Jeſus, than thouſands, I might ſay millions of pagans did believe of old, that the ſun in the firmament was the ſupreme, all-wiſe, all-powerful, eternal God: But yet this ignorance and miſtake of theirs did not ſo quit them from blame, but that by all the penmen of holy ſcripture, they are charged with groſs idolatry in worſhipping the ſun as ſuch. If their error and miſapprehenſion did not excuſe them, it can be much leſs imagined how the belief of tranſubſtantiation can excuſe the Roman-catholics: Which will appear more plainly, after I have repreſented this in the ſecond place.

(2.) We cannot deny, but that ignorance and miſtake, ſo far as it is innocent, and not contracted by our own fault, will excuſe in all caſes; and therefore in this caſe of idolatry: But, as this is certain, that

that all idolatry doth proceed from miſtake and miſapprehenſion; ſo it is alſo certain, that that idolatry will be the leaſt excuſable, and have the leaſt allowances made for it, that hath the feweſt temptations to it, and the moſt arguments of ſenſe and reaſon againſt it.

And now I will appeal to all the world, whether the Roman-catholics, that now worſhip a piece of bread, have not much fewer temptations to that worſhip, have not more arguments of ſenſe and reaſon againſt it, and conſequently can leſs pretend ignorance and miſtake, and therefore are leſs excuſeable than thoſe among the pagans of old that worſhipped the ſun. The pagans, without doubt, had more to ſay for the proof of the ſun's being God, than the Roman-catholics have for the proof that a wafer is God: Beſides, they had no ſupernatural revelation of God's will, but were left wholly to the light of nature; and if being prompted by the principles of their education, and the cuſtom of all the world, to worſhip a viſible god, what viſible being in the world was more likely to be he than the ſun? But are there are the ſame things to be ſaid for the Roman-catholics? No, certainly. They have the ſcripture to direct them to the true God; they have all their ſenſes to tell them that a piece of bread cannot be he; they have their reaſon to aſſure them, by the way of mathematical demonſtration, that tranſubſtantiation is impoſſible; they have twenty arguments from ſcripture to convince them, that the ſenſe they put upon our Saviour's words, *this is my body*, is not that he meant, but the quite contrary. Laſtly, they have had means and opportunities enough afforded them for the convincing them of their error, by the continued alarms and awakenings the proteſtants have given them,

them, who, for theſe hundred and fifty years, have declared and teſtified againſt them.

Never therefore let them pretend invincible ignorance; nor let them ſay, that their worſhipping the bread for Chriſt Jeſus, thro' a miſtake, can be no worſe interpreted by God, than a loyal ſubject's paying his homage to a privy-counſellor inſtead of the king can be interpreted by the king; for there is nothing alike in the things. The countryman, who thus miſplaceth his reſpect, is indeed excuſeable; but if he had lived at court, as long as the Roman-catholics pretend to have been acquainted with the ſcriptures, and to have made uſe of their reaſon, and yet ſhould continue his firſt compliments; all the world would count him either a fool, or a mad-man, or a knave.

But thus much let it ſuffice to have ſpoken of this point, and of this text.

Conſider what you have heard, and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things.

SERMON XV.

The ſixth chapter of St. John doth not favour the popiſh doctrine of tranſubſtantiation: And the ſenſe of the church of England, as to the real preſence in the euchariſt.

JOHN vi. 53.

Then Jeſus ſaith unto them, verily, I ſay unto you, except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

MY deſign now, is to explain this text, becauſe indeed, it is a text that needs ſome explication; and becauſe I am ſenſible, there are ſeveral perſons to whom it will be very acceptable to have a clear and ſatisfactory account given of it.

For indeed, this is the only text in ſcripture, beſides thoſe words of our Saviour in the inſtitution, *this is my body*, that is apt to ſtumble thoſe of our com-

communion in the point of the ſacrament; it ſeeming very much to favour the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation.

Our Saviour here ſaith, *Except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* And he adds further, *whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day. For my fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.*

This is the whole paſſage. What now (ſays the controverſers of the Roman church) can be more evidently plain, than that in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, the very true fleſh of Chriſt is eaten, and his blood drunk, even in the moſt ſtrict literal ſenſe?

But what if it can be made to appear, that the directly contrary is evidently plain, *viz.* That the words are ſo far from admitting ſuch a ſenſe, as they now ſpeak of, that they muſt, of neceſſity, be interpreted of a ſpiritual eating and drinking by faith, as we proteſtants contend for? I will not deny, but that our Saviour, in theſe paſſages, might poſſibly make ſome alluſion to the ſacrament, which he afterwards inſtituted; wherein, under the ſymbols of the bread and wine, he did then, and doth ſtill, exhibit to all worthy receivers his body and blood in a ſpiritual ſenſe; that is, the benefits of his body broken, and his blood ſhed upon the croſs. But this we ſay, that the eating and drinking of Chriſt's body and blood, here mentioned, is not primarily to be underſtood of receiving the ſacrament; much leſs to be confined to it: For chriſtians do truly eat and drink of Chriſt's body and blood, as it is here ſpoken of, by believing in him, and being united to him by the vital communications of his Holy Spirit.

But then further: If theſe words of our Saviour ſhould be granted wholly to reſpect our eating and drinking in the ſacrament, yet it is impoſſible they ſhould be underſtood in that groſs literal ſenſe that the papiſts would obtrude upon us, *viz.* That in the ſacrament of the euchariſt we do eat the very real natural body of Chriſt, and drink his blood, and not bread and wine, as our ſenſes would perſuade us.

In ſpeaking to this text, I will obſerve this method:

Firſt, I ſhall reſcue it from the Romiſh gloſſes, and ſhew, that it cannot poſſibly be interpreted any way in favour of tranſubſtantiation.

Secondly, I ſhall give a clear and intelligible account of the true meaning of it: and alſo ſhew, as far as I am able to judge, in what ſenſe the church of England doth own the real preſence of Chriſt's body and blood in the holy ſacrament.

Theſe points do deſerve the ſerious conſideration of all the honeſt members of our church.

I. Firſt of all, againſt the papiſts, I am to ſhew, That there is no foundation for their doctrine of tranſubſtantiation from this ſpeech of our Saviour's, but rather, conſidering what goes before, and what follows after, there is enough in this very text, wholly to overthrow that doctrine.

Now to make good this, I offer theſe following particulars:

1. Firſt, It is ſomething to our purpoſe, and ought at leaſt to be taken notice of, that this text is by ſome of the moſt learned papiſts themſelves, ſo far from being urged as an argument for tranſubſtantiation, that they acknowledge, nay contend, that it doth not reſpect the ſacrament at all. Several men of very great

great name among them have gone this way. Cardinal Cajetan, upon the place, gives exactly the same gloss that the generality of the protestants do. *To eat*, saith he, *the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood, is faith in the death of Jesus Christ: so that the sense is this; If ye use not the death of the Son of God as meat and drink, ye have not the life of the Spirit in you.* And he afterwards expressly denies that these words are to be understood of eating and drinking in the sacrament. In this the cardinal follows St. Augustin, and others of the fathers: and he is herein followed by several of his own party: but I shall not trouble you with their names.

2. Secondly, It will be hard to interpret these words of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood, in the popish sense, upon this account: Christ here speaks of such an eating his flesh and drinking his blood, as was actually at that time necessary to every man's salvation. *Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you.* This plainly proves that it was not only of obligation to all, but of absolute necessity to all that heard our Saviour, even then to eat his flesh, and drink his blood. But the sacrament of the communion was not at that time instituted, (but at least a year after) nor could the apostles, or any then present, have the least knowledge or intimation of such an institution. Either therefore the apostles at that time had no life in them, but were in a state of condemnation, or they eat the flesh of Christ and drank his blood, even then, when there was no sacrament in use; and consequently could not eat and drink it in the gross literal sense they would have.

3. But thirdly, though we should suppose a prolepsis or anticipation in these words, that is, that though

Chriſt expreſſed himſelf in the preſent time, yet he meant in the future, after that the ſacrament ſhould be inſtituted; yet admitting this, it would be very hard ſo to reſtrain *the eating of Chriſt's fleſh and drinking his blood*, to eating and drinking in the ſacrament, as to deny or exclude all other means of doing it. For if we are ſtrictly to expound theſe words of eating and drinking in the ſacrament, what will become of thoſe who never had opportunity to partake of Chriſt's body and blood in ſuch way? What will become of all baptized infants that die before they come to years of diſcretion? Nay, what will become of all perſons grown up, who are cut off by death before ever they come to the Lord's table, as God knows there are abundance in theſe days? Why, if theſe words be to be underſtood only of the ſacrament, all ſuch have no life in them, but are in a ſtate of death and condemnation, notwithſtanding their baptiſm. It is true this gloſs, as abſurd as it is, made ſuch impreſſions upon ſome churches in former ages, that they thought it as neceſſary to give the communion to ſucking children, as to baptize them. But the church of Rome itſelf is too wiſe, at this day, to retain any ſuch practice among them. And yet, if their expoſition of the text be true, I know not how this practice can be denied to be neceſſary.

4. But fourthly, Let us take our Saviour's words in a literal ſenſe, which is the thing they would have us do: yet this will do no ſervice to their cauſe, but rather differve it. Their doctrine is, That in the ſacrament, the elements of bread and wine, after the words of conſecration, are turned into the very body and blood of Chriſt; this they expreſs by the term of tranſubſtantiation. But now our Saviour's words

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in this chapter, if taken literally, will rather prove, that the body and blood of Chriſt are turned into bread and wine, than that bread and wine are turned into the body and blood of Chriſt. Our Saviour in the forty eighth verſe of this chapter, ſays, *I am the bread of life:* and, within three verſes after, he again repeats the expreſſion, *I am the living bread that came down from heaven*; then in the next he tells them, that *they muſt eat his fleſh and drink his blood.* How now are we to underſtand this? Why, he himſelf explains himſelf ſuitably to what he had ſaid before in the verſe following, and gives a reaſon of this ſtrange command of his: *For*, ſaith he, *my fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* Now, if there be any force at all in this paſſage, as indeed it is the moſt forcible of all the reſt, then the words will much rather prove, that Chriſt's fleſh is turned into meat; that is, into that bread he was before ſpeaking of, which is a known, common food for mankind, and anſwers to the manna in the wilderneſs; upon occaſion of which, all this diſcourſe begun: I ſay, the words will much more naturally prove this, than that the bread is turned into Chriſt's body. There is ſome colour, from the literal ſound of the words, to make the former interpretation; but no colour in the world for the latter, but rather directly the contrary.

5. But then fifthly, Let us take no advantage of this; let us allow the papiſts to interpret the text of eating Chriſt's body, and drinking his blood, in that very literal ſenſe they deſire; but then they will allow us to interpret Chriſt's former words, of his being *bread* in the ſame literal ſenſe alſo. If they do, as in reaſon they muſt do, then let us ſee what will come of it. According to this hypotheſis, we muſt acknow-

ledge, with them, that in the ſacrament we eat Chriſt's very body, and drink his blood; we eat and drink Chriſt himſelf: But then they muſt acknowledge, with us, that Chriſt is *true bread* (for that the literal ſenſe of his expreſſions doth as neceſſarily require as in the former caſe;) and therefore tho' we eat Chriſt's body in the ſacrament, yet we eat *true bread* alſo. Now, how we can eat Chriſt's very body, and eat true bread at the ſame time, let them that are concern'd anſwer it: But I am ſure no anſwer can be given, but what will overthrow tranſubſtantiation; for that doctrine will not allow us to believe that we eat Chriſt's very body and bread at the ſame time; but, on the contrary, it lays it down as an article of faith, That, after the bread is made Chriſt's body, it is no longer bread, but the appearance of it.

6. Sixthly, There is this other thing in the text fit to be taken notice of, which they will hardly be able to come off from. Let us interpret this ſaying of our Saviour, of the bread and wine in the ſacrament, and grant, that the one is really turned into Chriſt's body, and the other into his blood; let us, I ſay, admit this; but what will then follow? Why this; In what a miſerable condition, upon this ſuppoſition, are all lay-people among them, that are never allowed the neceſſary means of obtaining eternal life, that are here required by our Saviour? Our Saviour ſays expreſly, *Except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* The laity now, among the papiſts, it muſt be confeſs'd, do eat the fleſh of Chriſt in the ſacrament; but I do aſk, whether they do drink his blood? If they do not, then they want one half of the qualification that is required of them, in order to ſalvation: For Chriſt hath made the

the blood as necessary as the flesh; he doth not say, *except ye eat my flesh*, or *drink my blood, ye have no life in you*; but, *except ye eat my flesh*, and *drink my blood*. Both of them are certainly necessary, if the one be so; and yet every body knows, that the cup of the sacrament is wholly denied to the lay-people in the popish communion.

Their doctrine of concomitancy, which they have invented, as to this matter, will not in the least help them to get off from this difficulty: The doctrine of concomitancy is this: They teach that the blood of Christ, in the sacrament, is so essentially united with the body, that whosoever communicates but in one element, whether it be bread or wine, doth, upon account of that union, really partake of both body and blood. But now, tho' this shift might serve some turn, as to the evading the words of institution (tho' there is no colour in the earth for it) yet, as to this text, it cannot do them the same service. Christ here says expressly, if they do not both eat his flesh, and drink his blood, they have no life in them. They will allow no other interpretation of these words but this, that the flesh of Christ, here spoken of, is that which formerly was the bread in the sacrament; and the blood of Christ is that which formerly was the wine in the sacrament. Admitting now this sense to be true, I appeal to every one, whether it be not as necessary for every christian to partake of the cup, that is, of the blood, as it is to partake of the bread, that is, the body; and consequently, what will become of the people that are denied the cup?

7. But seventhly, and lastly, There is one thing further to be taken notice of in this text, that, if all hitherto said did signify nothing, would alone demon-

ſtratively overthrow the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, ſo far as it is grounded upon that text. As our Saviour ſaith, that, *Except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*; ſo he goes further, in the next verſe, and ſaith thus: *Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* The Romaniſts now ſay, that this fleſh is that which is eaten in the ſacrament of the euchariſt, by every communicant. The bread and wine, by the prieſt's words, are tranſubſtantiated into the body and blood of Chriſt; and this body and blood every communicant doth receive and eat. What now muſt we ſay? Doth every one that partakes of the ſacrament, partake of eternal life, and will Chriſt raiſe him up at the laſt day? No, without doubt, a great many receive unworthily; and ſhall be ſo far from receiving benefit by their communion, that it will increaſe their condemnation. Here now is the point: Chriſt ſays, *Whoſoever eateth his fleſh, and drinks his blood, hath eternal life, and he will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* The church of Rome not only confeſſeth, but contendeth earneſtly, that every perſon who receives the ſacrament, eats Chriſt's fleſh, and drinks his blood (for the prieſt, of the elements, hath made both the body and the blood). The natural concluſion from hence is, that every man that receives the ſacrament ſhall have eternal life: But is this a true concluſion? Or will they of the church of Rome ſtand to it? I believe they will not; for, if St. Paul may be believed, a man, in the ſacrament, may *eat and drink damnation to himſelf*, as well as life to himſelf. It is moſt evident therefore, even to demonſtration, that which is eaten and drunk in the ſacrament, is not always that body and blood of Chriſt, which

he ſpeaks of in the text; and conſequently, very far is this text from proving tranſubſtantiation; which was the thing to be made out.

II. And now, having done this, I come, in the ſecond place, to give ſuch an account of the text, as will avoid all the abſurdities that I have now mention'd, which the popiſh interpretation is obnoxious to; and will ſuit and cohere very well with all the paſſages in this diſcourſe of our Saviour's.

And here I deſire, in the firſt place, it may be taken notice of, that our Saviour himſelf hath given us a key for the interpreting this text, and all the paſſages that relate to it: So that we do not make an expoſition to ſerve our own cauſe, but go exactly by ſuch rules as our Lord himſelf hath preſcrib'd for the interpreting his words. This is certain, that whatever gloſs the Romaniſts make upon the text, Chriſt hath, in expreſs words, forewarned us, that we ſhould not take theſe his ſayings in a groſs literal ſenſe, but in a myſtical and ſpiritual one.

The paſſage is remarkable. In the ſixtieth verſe of this chapter it is told us, That many of his diſciples, when they heard this ſevere command of eating Chriſt's fleſh, and drinking his blood (taking the words in a carnal ſenſe, as the papiſts now do) *They were much offended, and ſaid, This is a hard ſaying, who can hear it? Now* (as we have it in the next verſe) *when Jeſus knew this in himſelf, that his diſciples murmured at it, he ſaid unto them, doth this offend you? What and if ſhe ſhall ſee the Son of man aſcend where he was before?* In theſe words, our Saviour ſeems to chide their dulneſs, and to endeavour to rectify their miſtake about what he had ſpoken: This is his ſenſe; "You are offended at me for telling you, that you

"muſt

" muſt eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his " blood: This you take in a groſs literal ſenſe; but " ſure you will be convinced, that I have no ſuch " meaning, when you ſee this Son of man, with his " body and blood, viſibly aſcend into heaven, from " whence he firſt came down: Then ſure, you will " have no ſuch carnal imagination of eating my very " body, and drinking my blood; for then there will " be no body to be eaten, nor no blood to be drank; " for both will be in heaven, and not here upon " earth." And, leſt this ſhould not give them light enough for the underſtanding the allegory he had all along purſued, he yet ſpake more plainly to the buſineſs, by adding this further thing: *It is*, ſays he, *the ſpirit that quickeneth, the fleſh profiteth nothing.* The plain ſenſe of which words is this: " Tho' you could " really eat my body or my fleſh in that groſs man- " ner that you have taken me in, yet that would do " you no good, as to the ſpiritual life of your ſouls, " that I have been all along ſpeaking of. In every " creature that hath life, it is not the fleſh that is " chewed by the teeth, that is the fountain or prin- " ciple of life in that creature, but the ſoul or the " ſpirit that animates that body: and ſo it is as to the " ſpiritual life of the ſoul. It is not my natural fleſh, " tho' you ſhould eat it with your mouths, that would " profit you at all, in order to everlaſting life; but it " is the Spirit of God, my Spirit, that goes along and " dwells with all true believers and diſciples of mine, " that muſt quicken you at the laſt day; muſt both " produce the ſpiritual life in you in this world, and " continue and perfect that life in eternal glory."

And then he thus concludes: *The words that I ſpeak unto you they are ſpirit, and they are life*; that is, the words

words that I have now ſpoken concerning eating of my fleſh, are to be underſtood in a ſpiritual ſenſe, or of a ſpiritual eating and drinking; and by that means, and that only, a true eternal life is to be obtain'd.

Well now, whether ſhall we believe the Romaniſts, who would interpret our Saviour's words carnally, or our Saviour himſelf, who ſaith, that he ſpeaks them in a ſpiritual ſenſe; and affirms, that the carnal ſenſe, if it was practicable, would really do men no good? Well, but what is this ſpiritual ſenſe of eating Chriſt's fleſh, and drinking his blood, that is here intended? To this I anſwer plainly, according to all the light that the contexts afford in this matter; *To eat Chriſt's fleſh, and to drink his blood* (as our Saviour ſpeaks of it in this chapter) is no more than *to come to him*, or *to believe in him:* for, by both theſe phraſes, this term of eating and drinking Chriſt's fleſh and blood, is expounded in this very chapter. Chriſt ſaith, in the fortieth verſe of this chapter, *This is the will of him that ſent me, that every one that believeth on the Son may have everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* In the forty-fourth verſe he ſays, *No man can come unto me, except my Father draw him, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* In the fifty-fourth verſe he ſaith, *Whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* So that the very ſame promiſe, in the ſame words, being made in the ſame diſcourſe to all that *believe in Chriſt*, to all that *come to him*, to all that *eat his fleſh, and drink his blood*; it is an undeniable argument, that both *coming to Chriſt*, and *believing on him*, and *eating and drinking his fleſh and blood*, are but ſeveral expreſſions of the ſame thing. If there be any difference in the phraſes, it is this, that

that the *eating Chriſt's fleſh, and drinking his blood,* doth more particularly refer to his death, than the other two phraſes do.

This, in the general: But, to ſpeak more plainly, and to give a more particular account from the context:

Chriſt's whole buſineſs, in this chapter, doth briefly lie here. The men that now followed Jeſus, were thoſe who had partaken of a late miracle of his, whereby he had fed ſome thouſands with a few loaves and fiſh. Jeſus takes occaſion from this to tell them, *That they did not ſeek him for the miracles ſake, but for the loaves they had ſhared of,* ver. 26. And from thence he takes occaſion, as it was his uſual manner, to exhort, *Not to labour for the meat that periſheth, but for that which endureth to everlaſting life,* ver. 27. They aſk him, *How they might do that,* ver. 28. He anſwers them directly, the way was, *To believe in him,* ver. 29. They aſk him, *What ſign he would give, or what miracle he would work, that they might believe in him,* ver. 30. And they urge him to do ſuch a thing as Moſes did (ver. 31.) that is, to *give them bread from heaven,* ver. 32. Upon this occaſion, he begins and compares himſelf with that manna which Moſes gave the Iſraelites; nay, ſhews how much he excels that, particularly in this, that that only continued a ſhort temporal life, but by believing on him, they might get an eternal life, ver. 49, 50. They *murmur* at this, ver. 41. He tells them again confidently, *He that believeth in me hath everlaſting life; I am that bread of life,* (ver. 47, 48.) *viz.* that ſpiritual food which will bring men to it. And, leſt they ſhould be miſtaken what kind of bread he meant, he explains himſelf more fully, *The bread* ſaith he,

(ver.

(ver. 51.) *is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*; that is to say, I will lay down my life for the salvation of mankind; and this death of mine shall be life to others; and this flesh of mine thus crucified, shall be meat to all believers; such meat as shall nourish them up to everlasting life; and therefore whosoever eats this flesh of mine thus offer'd, and drinks this blood of mine thus shed, shall have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Which is the same thing as if he had said, "Whoever doth heartily believe in me, and become my "disciple, and frames his manners according to my "commandments, and is so far from being scanda"lized at my death, that still he adheres to my faith, "and continues my follower; to such an one, this "death of mine will procure eternal life, by the "means of my Holy Spirit which shall raise him up "at the last day. But on the other hand, unless a "man do believe in me, and become my disciple, "and even turn my death and passion to good nourish"ment (how scandalous and ignominious soever it "be) by a lively faith, so as that he shall not upon "that account forsake me, nor be offended at my "doctrine, but still persevere in my faith and in my "service, I say, except a man doth this, he hath no "life in him, nor will I raise him up at the last day."

This in short, so far as we can gather from the whole chapter, and by comparing one passage with another, is the true genuine sense of our Saviour's words we are now insisting on.

Thus you see, that the text is not to be interpreted in a gross carnal sense, as if it was necessay to salvation, that every one should with his mouth eat the natural flesh of Christ, or drink his blood. It is

enough

enough if he do truly believe in Jeſus Chriſt; that he be his diſciple; that he ſo believe his death, as to be conformable to it, by his dying to ſin, and living to righteouſneſs. This is truly feeding on Chriſt's body and his blood.

And tho' we do not deny that one principal inſtance of eating Chriſt's fleſh, and drinking Chriſt's blood, be by the means of the ſacrament, yet it is by no means to be confined to that only. Every true believer that lives according to his belief, doth in every act of religion he performs, eat the fleſh of Chriſt and drink his blood, for he exerciſeth acts of faith and obedience to him, and that is the true eating and drinking here mentioned.

And this is that which St. Auguſtin ſo often ſpeaks of: *How*, ſays he, *ſhall I ſend up my hands to heaven to take hold of Chriſt* ſitting there? *Send thy faith, and thou haſt hold of him. Why prepareſt thou thy teeth and thy belly? Believe, and thou haſt eaten: For this is to eat the living bread. He that believeth in Chriſt, eateth Chriſt; he is inviſibly fed, becauſe he is inviſibly regenerated.*

I might produce many more teſtimonies of the fathers to prove the orthodoxy of this proteſtant expoſition, if it were either needful or convenient.

But what then? Do not we in the ſacrament truly partake of the body and blood of Chriſt? God forbid that any one ſhould deny it. There is none that underſtands any thing of the ſacrament, but muſt acknowledge, that therein, to all worthy receivers, the body and blood of Chriſt is both given, and likewiſe received by them. This is the ſenſe of the church of England, when ſhe doth ſo often declare, that ſhe owns the *real preſence of Chriſt's body and blood*, to

all that worthily receive the ſacrament: Which being a point about which ſo much duſt hath been lately raiſed, it will not be amiſs if I dwell a little upon this matter.

There are ſome that would bear us in hand, that whatever exceptions we make againſt the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, yet in truth the doctrine of the church of England, as to the ſacrament, if it be not the ſame with that, yet is every way as myſterious, and may be charged with many difficulties and abſurdities.

The church of England, ſay they, doth expreſly own and profeſs *the real preſence* of Chriſt's body and blood to all worthy receivers: and this very thing may be loaded with as many difficulties, as the other doctrine.

To this we anſwer: It can be loaded with no other difficulty at all, but is a plain and intelligible thing, as the church of England explains it. We do indeed own, that Chriſt is really preſent in the ſacrament, to all worthy receivers; and in our communion-office we pray God *to grant that we may eat the fleſh of his dear Son, and drink his blood*; and in the prayer of conſecration, we *beſeech him to grant, that we receiving theſe his creatures of bread and wine, may be partakers of Chriſt's moſt bleſſed body and blood.* All this we own, and it is very neceſſary we ſhould; ſince the apoſtle hath in expreſs terms ſaid the very ſame thing, telling us, *That the bread we break is the communion of Chriſt's body; and the cup of bleſſing which we drink, is the communion of his blood*, 1 Cor. x. 10. Now ſince this was the language both of Chriſt and his apoſtles, about the holy ſacrament, and upon that account the church, in all ages, hath retained thoſe

terms

terms and expreſſions, there was very good reaſon we, in our public liturgy, ſhould retain them likewiſe.

But now all the queſtion lies here, In what ſenſe theſe terms, or phraſes, or expreſſions, are to be underſtood? They of the other communion contend, that the eating Chriſt's fleſh, or the partaking of his body and blood, is to be underſtood in a ſtrict, literal, proper ſenſe. We ſay, that the literal ſenſe is impoſſible, becauſe Chriſt could not give away his body to the apoſtles, while he was alive, with his own hands; much leſs could he give it to them broken and crucified before he was crucified. And therefore theſe expreſſions are to be underſtood in a ſpiritual, myſtical ſenſe; ſuch a ſenſe as the apoſtles muſt be ſuppoſed to underſtand them in, when they received Chriſt's body and blood from the hand of our Saviour himſelf. They ſay, that the ſubſtance of bread and wine is changed into the ſubſtance of Chriſt's body and blood; ſo that in the ſacrament every communicant, good and bad, doth not eat bread, but the very fleſh of Chriſt. Our church ſaith, *That the natural body and blood of our Saviour are in heaven, and not here; and therefore our giving, eating, taking the body of Chriſt, is only after an heavenly and ſpiritual manner, and the means whereby they are received and eaten is faith.* Theſe are the very words of the rubric of our liturgy, and of our church-articles. You ſee here is a wide difference between us and them. The plain meaning of our church is this: In the holy communion, as in the other ſacrament of baptiſm, *there is the ſign, and the thing ſignified; the outward part, or ſign of the Lord's ſupper is the bread and wine; the inward part, or the thing ſignified is the body and blood*

blood of Chriſt. Now as our bodies are made partakers of the bread and wine, for their ſtrengthening and refreſhment; ſo (if we receive them worthily) our ſouls are made partakers of the body and blood of Chriſt, to their ſtrengthening and refreſhment. Theſe are the words of our church-catechiſm. But then this body and blood of Chriſt are to be underſtood in ſuch a ſenſe, as a ſoul can be ſuppoſed to feed upon a body; or to receive ſtrength and nouriſhment by feeding upon it: But now the body of Chriſt can be no otherwiſe a food for the ſtrengthning and refreſhing our ſouls, than only as the ſpiritual benefits of that body and blood, that is to ſay, the virtue and effects of Chriſt's ſacrifice upon the croſs, are communicated to it; nor is the ſoul capable of receiving thoſe benefits otherwiſe than by faith. So that the body and blood of Chriſt, in the ſenſe of our church, are only the benefits of Chriſt's paſſion, that is to ſay, the pardon of ſin, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and a nearer union with Chriſt; and our eating and drinking of that body and blood, is our being made partakers of thoſe benefits; and the mouth, whereby we thus eat and drink, that is, the means whereby we are made partakers of thoſe benefits, is our true and lively faith.

This is plainly the ſenſe of our church in this matter. It is certain, ſhe cannot mean the body of Chriſt, in any other ſenſe than what we have now declar'd, becauſe ſhe expreſly affirms, That Chriſt *hath but one body, and that body is now in heaven, and not here*; and ſhe declares further, That that body which we *eat, is for the nouriſhment of our ſouls*, (which the body of Chriſt, in a proper literal ſenſe, tho' it were here preſent, could not contribute any thing to.) And

laſtly,

laſtly, ſhe declares, *That the mouth, whereby we partake of this body, is faith:* which is ſuch a mouth as never was heard of, for the eating a body truly and properly ſo called.

The ſum of all this is, That when we talk of the preſence of Chriſt's body in the ſacrament, or ſay, that, to the worthy receivers, the body and blood of Chriſt is communicated, we mean no more than this, That the Holy Spirit of Chriſt is preſent at every ſuch ordinance of God; and that whoſoever comes prepared with faith and repentance, and devotion and charity, that Holy Spirit will not fail to apply to every ſuch communicant the very body and blood of Chriſt broken and ſhed for us, that is, all the virtue, and all the benefits and effects of Chriſt's ſacrifice.

So that if any one aſk you, whether you own the body and blood of Chriſt to be truly preſent in the ſacrament? your anſwer to this queſtion muſt be by another queſtion. Aſk them what they mean by the body and blood of Chriſt? If by thoſe words they mean the ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt Jeſus, for the conveying all the benefits and effects of his body, that was crucified, and his blood that was ſhed for mankind, to all thoſe ſouls that do piouſly and worthily commemorate his death by the ſacrament, in this ſenſe you do, with the church of England, own a real preſence of Chriſt's body and blood to all worthy communicants. But if by the body and blood of Chriſt, they mean the ſubſtance of his body and blood which was taken of the virgin Mary, and was crucified and ſhed at Jeruſalem, and is now at the right hand of God, in this ſenſe, according to the church of England, you cannot own any real preſence, but rather a real abſence: For Chriſt hath but one body, and *that body*

body is in heaven, and not here, it being againſt the truth of his natural body to be in more places than one at the ſame time.

This now is a plain, and clear, and intelligible account of the matter. And this, I believe, and no other, is the ſenſe of the church of England about the real preſence, ſo far as we can judge by her moſt public authentic declarations. And this hath been her ſenſe about it ever ſince the reformation; nay, I may ſay it was the doctrine of the church of England, ſeveral ages before the reformation; as may appear from the Saxon homilies yet extant, which were read in our church here, even before the conqueſt.

I might be very large in heaping up the teſtimonies of our divines to this purpoſe. But I ſhall content myſelf with reciting to you only one paſſage of the moſt learned arch-biſhop Cranmer. Whoſe words may go further than any other man's, for the aſcertaining and clearing the ſenſe of our church in this matter, ſince he had the principal hand both in compiling our liturgy and our articles. The paſſage I ſpeak of, is in the preface to his book againſt biſhop Gardiner. And I ſhall conclude with it.

"Moreover, (ſays he) when I ſay, and repeat "many times in my book, that the body of Chriſt is "preſent in them that worthily receive the ſacrament, "leſt any man ſhould miſtake my words, and think "that I mean, that altho' Chriſt be not corporally in "the outward viſible ſigns, yet he is corporally in the "perſons that duly receive them; this is to advertiſe "the reader, that I mean no ſuch thing. But my "meaning is, that the force, the grace, the virtue, "and benefits of Chriſt's body that was crucified for "us, and of his blood that was ſhed for us, be really

"and

" and effectually preſent with all them that duly re-
" ceive the ſacrament. But all this I underſtand of
" the ſpiritual preſence, of the which he ſaith, *I will*
" *be with you to the end of the world*, Mat. xxviii. 20.
" And *whereſoever two or three are gathered together*
" *in my name, there I am in the midſt of them*, Mat.
" xviii. 20. *And he that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh*
" *my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him*, John vi. 56.
" Nor no more truly is Chriſt corporally or really pre-
" ſent in the due adminiſtration of the Lord's ſupper,
" than he is in the due adminiſtration of baptiſm, that
" is to ſay, in both ſpiritually, by grace. And where-
" ſoever in the ſcripture it is ſaid that Chriſt, God,
" or the Holy Ghoſt is in any man, the ſame is to be
" underſtood ſpiritually, by grace."

Theſe are the words of that excellent biſhop and martyr, and there needs nothing to be added to them.

I pray God give us all grace both in the ſacrament, and in all our acts of religious worſhip, and in our whole converſation, ſo to eat the fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his blood, that we may have eternal life abiding in us, and by his Spirit may be raiſed up at the laſt day.

A P-

APPENDIX.

The LETTER *which occasioned the following* ANSWER.

To the Reverend Dr. Sharp.

Reverend SIR, March 1. 1686-7.

" IF you can prove to me, that Christ hath no in-
" fallible church upon earth, or if you can give
" me a catalogue of but one man in an age that pro-
" fessed the same faith the church of England now
" embraces, from our Saviour's time till now, I will
" promise you to be no Roman-catholic. So begging
" your pardon for giving you this trouble, I take leave
" to subscribe myself, SIR,

Your humble Servant,

ALI: KINGESMILL.

" *P. S.* What church holds all the thirty-nine arti-
" cles of the church of England?

His ANSWER.

MADAM,

IN the business wherein you have concerned me with you, you seem to have forgot what is your part, and what is mine. You tell me, you were bred up in the church of England, which church denies the in-

infallibility of the Roman church; now, if any arguments have been offered you, which ſtartle you in that point, and ſeem to you to prove that Chriſt hath an infallible church on earth, and that the church of Rome is that church; your province is, to acquaint me with thoſe arguments that do thus unſettle you; and my part is, to endeavour to give you ſatisfaction about them: But now, you turn the tables, and require of me to prove to you, that the church is not infallible. Thoſe that directed you to proceed thus, know very well, that this is not fair dealing; and ſince it is their ſide that maintain the affirmative, namely, that the church of Rome is infallible, they ought to prove it, and not put it upon us, who deny it, to prove a negative: So that all the anſwer that I need to return to this propoſition of yours, is, to make another to your friends; and that is, that if any of them can prove to me, that the church of Rome is infallible, I will not only give my conſent that you ſhall be a Roman-catholic, but I will be one myſelf.

As for the next thing you put upon me, *viz.* To give you a catalogue of but one man in an age, that profeſſed the ſame faith the church of England now embraces, from our Saviour's time till now. To that I give you this anſwer, that whenever your friends will name one man, within the compaſs of five hundred years after Chriſt, of whom it appears that he held, in all things, according to the faith of the church of Rome, as it is now eſtabliſhed by the council of Trent, I will, at the ſame time, do what you deſire of me.

To the queſtion you aſk in the poſtſcript of your letter, *viz.* What church holds all the thirty-nine articles of our church, beſides the church of England? (ſo

(ſo I ſuppoſe you meant to put it) I return another queſtion, as needful for you to be ſatisfied in; and that is this, What church in the world holds all the definitions of the council of Trent, beſides the church of Rome, if, indeed, all the parts even of that church do receive all of them?

Theſe, Madam, were the anſwers I drew up to your captious queſtions, immediately upon the receipt of your letter; and I once thought of ſending them thus, without any further additions, being ſure, that what I here offer to you, is as reaſonable as what you demand; and it concerns you as much to be ſatisfied by your friends, in thoſe things that I propoſe to you, as it concerns you to be ſatisfied by me in thoſe things you have propoſed to me. But, upon ſecond thoughts, that you might not think that I have a deſign to uſe you, as I perceive your friends do, that is, only to amuſe and blunder you, and not to inſtruct you; I was reſolved to employ my firſt leiſure in looking over your paper again, and giving you, as plainly as I could, my ſenſe of it; and that is the reaſon you ſtay a day or two longer for my anſwer.

Your firſt demand is, to prove to you, that Chriſt has no infallible church upon earth. Madam, tho' it be not uſual, as I ſaid, to put people to prove negatives (the proof always lying on the affirmer's ſide, it being ſufficient to ſatisfy one, that a thing is not; that there is no proof or reaſon for the being of it) yet I ſhall, for once, ſo far comply with you, as to offer you ſome of my reaſons, why I do not believe that Chriſt hath any church upon earth abſolutely, and in all things infallible, or infallible in that ſenſe in which the Romaniſts do uſually attribute infallibility to their church.

And my firſt reaſon is, that if Chriſt had meant that there ſhould be always an infallible church upon earth, I cannot but believe, that it would have been ſome-where or other expreſly told us in the New-teſtament, both that there was an infallibility lodged in the church for ever; and likewiſe, in which, of all the churches in the world, this infallibility was lodged; that ſo, upon all occaſions, chriſtians in all ages, might know where to have recourſe to that infallible church: But now, this not being done in the whole New-teſtament, neither by our Saviour, nor by his apoſtles; it is an argument to me, that no ſuch thing was ever intended by them. Your friends here, muſt not think to put us off with, *Thou art* Peter, *&c. And upon this rock*, &c. *And if he will not hear the church*, &c. And ſuch other texts as theſe; which, as they have been anſwered a thouſand times; ſo in truth, to any unbiaſſed reader, will appear either not to ſpeak at all to the buſineſs of infallibility, or not to concern any but the apoſtles themſelves. Indeed, I am ſo very well aſſured of the weakneſs of your ſcripture proofs for the Roman church's infallibility, that, I believe, there may as plain texts of ſcripture be produced for the infallibility of the king, or for the infallibility of every good man, or for the infallibility of any two or three chriſtians, aſſembling together in the name of Chriſt, as there can be produced for the infallibility of the pope, or of any particular church.

My ſecond reaſon, why I do not believe that Chriſt hath any infallible church upon earth, is, becauſe I do not find that any of the primitive churches ever pretended to any ſuch infallibility, no, not the church of Rome herſelf.

I do not find that, in the controverſies which aroſe in the ancient church about matters of faith, the guides of the church ever made uſe of this argument of the church's infallibility for the diſquieting and ending of them; which yet, had they known of any ſuch thing, had been the propereſt and the eaſieſt means they could have uſed.

I know that the ancient fathers had another method of confuting heretics and ſchiſmatics, than by appealing to the church's infallibility, namely, by bringing their doctrines to be tried by the ancient uſages and traditions of the apoſtolic churches; and eſpecially by the divine oracles of the ſcriptures, which they looked upon as the entire and only rule of faith.

I know further, as to the church of Rome, that, by what appears by the carriage and behaviour of other churches in the primitive times towards that church, in matters where they were concerned together, it muſt be thought impoſſible that thoſe churches ſhould ever have entertained any opinion, or ſo much as imagination, of the Romiſh church's infallibility; they making no ſcruple, whenever there was occaſion, to oppoſe the ſenſe of that church as vigorouſly, as they either did, or could, oppoſe any other particular church that differed from them.

My third reaſon, why I do not believe the doctrine of the church's infallibility, as it is maintained by the church of Rome, is, becauſe I do not ſee any effects of this infallibility in the world, or any good that hath accrued to the church, which may not as well be aſcribed to God's ordinary aſſiſtance of every chriſtian church, without infallibility as with it.

It is ſaid that, without an infallible judge, controverſies that ariſe among chriſtians cannot be ended:

Why, that very church that pretends to infallibility, are not yet agreed among themſelves about ſeveral points of religion; nay, this very buſineſs of infallibility, as to the ſeat of it, where, or in whom it is lodged, is yet as great a controverſy among them as any.

It is ſaid that, without an infallible judge, the ſcriptures cannot be expounded; the ſenſe of texts cannot be aſcertained. Why, I would gladly know, what advantages the church of Rome, that pretends to infallibility, hath in this reſpect above other churches that pretend to none? Do they underſtand the ſcriptures better than we, or have they cleared or ſettled the ſenſe of but one doubtful text, by the power of their infallibility, during all the time they have pretended to it? Let them produce one text, the ſenſe of which is, by this means, aſcertained? I believe they will not offer at it: They know, as well as we, that all thoſe texts of ſcripture, which were difficult and obſcure at the firſt, remain ſo to this day, for any thing that their infallible judge has done towards the clearing of them. And if the ſenſe of any obſcure paſſages in thoſe holy books, be more cleared, or better aſcertained to us, than they were formerly; no thanks for this to an infallible judge, but to fallible commentators, whoſe learning and induſtry, through the bleſſing of God, have been of great uſe for the untying of difficulties of ſcripture: Nay, I add this further, that, of all expoſitors of holy ſcripture that I know of, the popes themſelves, who are, by ſome, accounted the infallible judges, have been as unlucky as any; and ſo far have they been from clearing obſcure texts, that they have miſerably perverted and miſapplied the plaineſt, as abundance of inſtances might

might be given out of their epiſtles, which now make a conſiderable part of the canon-law.

My fourth reaſon againſt any church's infallibility, and which, I ſuppoſe, will be a good argument with you, is this, becauſe I can, as I think, make it appear, that the church of Rome (which is the only church in the world, that I know of, which pretends to this infallibility) hath, herſelf, actually erred in ſeveral points of faith; and if ſo, it is impoſſible that ſhe ſhould always have been infallible. This, I hope, is a convincing reaſon againſt the church of Rome's infallibility; and, provided your friend will fairly anſwer my three foregoing negative proofs, by ſhewing that I have miſrepreſented things, as to this matter; and that it may be proved from ſcripture, and from ancient church-authority, and from effects viſible in the world, that Chriſt always hath an infallible church upon earth; then I promiſe to join iſſue with him upon this laſt point, and to make out, that the church of Rome cannot be that infallible church, becauſe ſhe hath actually erred.

The reaſons of this my aſſertion are theſe: If the ſcriptures be infallible, then the church of Rome hath actually erred, becauſe ſhe hath in many inſtances, both of doctrine and practice, departed from the holy ſcriptures.

Again: If the church of the primitive ages was infallible, then the church of Rome hath actually erred, becauſe the church of Rome now holds doctrines which the primitive church, nay, and the Roman church itſelf, diſowned and rejected; and, on the other ſide, the church of Rome now rejects and diſowns doctrines which the primitive church, and the church of Rome herſelf, in thoſe days, owned and believed: So that

either the ancient church was not infallible, or the present church is not so; however, the church of Rome hath little pretence to it.

Again: If it can be made to appear, that one pope hath declared himself contradictorily to another pope, in matters of faith; or, that one council, confirmed by the pope, hath contradicted another council, confirmed by the pope, and that too in matters of faith, as one of the councils themselves accounted them; then, I suppose, you will grant, that the church of Rome hath actually, at some time or other, erred; the highest authority in that church maintaining things contradictory to one another, unless you will say, that contradictory propositions may both be true: But now this we are ready to make out, when there is occasion.

I have dwelt the longer upon this business of infallibility, because I remember you told me, that this was the main, if not the only point, you desired to have some discourse about.

As for the other thing in your letter, about one in an age professing the faith of the church of England, how that came to be tacked to the other, you yourself best know; however, I will give you my answer as briefly as I can to that part of your letter, from whence you yourself may be able to frame an answer also to the question in your postscript.

You say, that if I can give you a catalogue of but one man in an age that professed the same faith the church of England now embraceth, from our Saviour's time till now, you promise you will not be a Roman-catholic.

Madam, the faith of the church of England, is that common faith that was once delivered to the saints, and was put into writing by the apostles, and other in-

inſpired men, and is ſummarily contained in the ancient creeds of the church. It is that faith into which all chriſtians, in all ages of the church, were baptiſed; and which, in ancient times, was thought ſufficient to carry a man to heaven, if he lived according to it. And laſtly, it is that faith which is at this day owned by the church of Rome herſelf (tho' the hay and ſtubble they have built upon, the new additions they have made to it, in the council of Trent, without either authority of ſcripture, or apoſtolical tradition, are deſervedly rejected by us) I ſay, this is the faith embraced by the church of England. And whereas you only deſire a catalogue of one man in an age that profeſſed this faith, we will be more liberal to you, and give you catalogues of great numbers in every age that lived and died in this faith; nay, we are ſure that the apoſtles, the ancient martyrs and confeſſors, nay, and all holy chriſtians, in all ages, profeſſed this faith, and never had any other.

This now, Madam, being the plain ſtate of the caſe, I hope you will think yourſelf obliged to continue in our communion, ſince you promiſe that, if I can but give you a catalogue of one man in an age, that profeſſed the ſame faith.

Why, Madam, I declare to you (and let your friend make out the contrary if he can) that every church, and every good chriſtian, in every age, from Chriſt's time till now, hath profeſſed the ſame faith the church of England now embraceth; for all churches, and all good chriſtians, have always profeſſed to believe the doctrines of the holy ſcriptures, and have always profeſſed to believe all the articles of the ancient creeds; and that, I aſſure you, is the faith of the church of England. And I add this further,

that it is for this very reaſon, that we allow the church of Rome to be a part of the church of Chriſt, and the members of it capable of ſalvation; becauſe in that church, the common faith is ſtill profeſſed, even the faith of the church of England; tho' yet with ſo great a mixture of dangerous errors ſuperſtructed thereupon, that we, who are convinced of thoſe errors, dare not for the world, embrace the communion of that church, ſo long as the joining in the profeſſion and practice of thoſe errors, are made neceſſary terms of that communion.

But I expect that you ſhould ſay, that by the faith embraced by the church of England (as you expreſs it in your letter) you meant the thirty-nine articles, by which the church of England is diſtinguiſhed from the church of Rome: And you would have me give you a liſt either of churches or men, that have always believed according to that faith of the church of England.

But, Madam, tho' this demand or requeſt might juſtly enough be made by us to thoſe of the popiſh communion, with reference to the articles of the council of Trent, as they are ſummed up in pope Pius's new creed, where the belief of the Trent-articles are made as neceſſary to ſalvation, as the belief of the articles of the old creed; yet it is, by no means, a fair demand of the papiſts to us proteſtants, with reference to our thirty-nine articles; and my reaſon is this, becauſe we do not look upon all our thirty-nine articles to be articles of faith, in the ſenſe that you look upon the definitions of the council of Trent to be articles of faith.

We believe ſome of our articles to be neceſſary points of faith; and theſe are common to us with other

other churches. We believe all of our articles to be uſeful truths, but ſeveral of them are negative ones, being levelled againſt the corruptions and innovations of the church of Rome, and other prevailing errors of the times they were made in. Theſe now, are not ſtrictly and properly parts of our faith, but rather needful guards and ſecurities of our church againſt the dangerous miſtakes in matters of religion that were then, and are now, too prevalent in the world.

This very thing, that I have now repreſented, may ſatisfy you fully of the unreaſonableneſs of your demand, in the ſenſe that I believe you meant it in. You would have us ſhew you a ſucceſſion of men, that have always made the thirty-nine articles of the church of England the ſtandard of their faith; or that have, in all points, held as the church of England doth in her thirty-nine articles. Why, Madam, would you have had doctrines condemned and cautioned againſt, before there were any people in the world held thoſe doctrines? Would you have had primitive fathers and councils to have made expreſs articles and declarations againſt the pope's ſupremacy? For inſtance, againſt the infallibility of general councils, againſt tranſubſtantiation, againſt the half-communion, and the like, when there were no ſuch opinions or practices heard of in the world. It was the corruptions and innovations in the doctrines of chriſtianity, introduced of latter times, and chiefly by the church of Rome, that gave occaſion to thoſe articles and declarations of our church; but ſure you cannot expect that any church, or that any man, ſhould have declared againſt ſuch errors in the church, before they were in being.

Let us suppose, for instance, the second council of Nice, which established image-worship, should, at the same time, have condemned Mahometanism, which not long before, had begun to appear in the world; let us suppose likewise a Turk should now challenge you to give a catalogue of but one church; or, if that be too much, of but one man in an age, that, from Christ's time till the second council of Nice, always professed the same faith, as to Mahomet's being a false prophet, that that council embraced; nay, and should promise you, that if you could give him such a catalogue, he would not be a Mahometan: I ask you, What you would say to this Turkish argument? Is it a good argument, or is it not? Doth it overthrow the established doctrine of the council of Nice, or no? I believe you will say, that the Turk makes a very unreasonable demand (considering that Mahomet appeared not till long after Christ's time) and that his argument is nothing to the purpose. And yet I assure you, Madam, this is just the very same argument that your friend hath put in your mouth for the overthrowing of the established doctrines of the church of England, in her thirty-nine articles.

This may be sufficient to let you see how unreasonable your demand is; but I will say this further, by way of direct answer to it, *viz.* That, by what we can gather from the scriptures, and from the sense of the primitive church, declared by the fathers and councils, we think we have reason to believe, that the ancient churches of Christ would have joined in communion with the church of England upon such principles and doctrines as are now established in the thirty-nine articles; and that in those points, that are now controverted between us and the church of Rome,

if

if they had then been ſtarted, they would have been on our ſide, and not have ſided with the Romaniſts. And this we are ſo confident of, that we will, at any time, refer the points in difference between us to be tried by the holy ſcriptures, and by the ſenſe of the primitive church, ſo far as we have any notices of it by fathers or councils.

And now, Madam, you have my ſenſe of your paper, I have this to beg of you, That, if any of your friends think fit to reply, he would not catch at any ſingle paſſage or expreſſion in this my anſwer; and from thence take occaſion to aſk me I know not how many ſophiſtical queſtions, which only tend to confound you, and to create me trouble; but that he would deal like a man of learning, and piety, and ingenuity, and anſwer my arguments, or reply to my anſwers one by one, plainly and honeſtly, ſo as may contribute moſt to your diſcovery of truth. This way, I am ſure, if you be ſincere, is moſt for your benefit. Thus, Madam, praying God to direct you, *I reſt*, &c.

An ANSWER *to ſome* QUESTIONS *propoſed by a Roman-catholic.*

QUESTION I.

MAY *a man, wilfully dying a Roman-catholic, be ſaved?*

ANSWER.

What the propoſer means by wilfully dying a Roman-catholic, I know not. In our language, this now [wilfully] hath commonly an ill ſenſe; and we ſeldom uſe it, but with reſpect to a man that obſtinately follows his own will, againſt the beſt reaſon and advice. Now, if this be his ſenſe of wilfully dying a Roman-catholic, he muſt expect a harder anſwer to his queſtion, than I am now willing to give: In the mean time, till he hath explained himſelf, this is my general anſwer, *viz.*

A man, dying a Roman-catholic, may, or may not be ſaved, according as his circumſtances, in this world, render his errors more or leſs excuſable.

We hold the errors of popery to be, in themſelves, dangerous; and therefore we tell every one, that it concerns them, as they love their ſouls, to have a care of them; but yet we do not ſay that all papiſts are damn'd: As neither do the more moderate Roman-catholics ſay that all proteſtants are.

But what is the deſign of putting this queſtion? and at the head of all the reſt? The propoſer knows well enough, that, whether we can anſwer it or no, or whatever the anſwer be that is given to it, it makes nothing

nothing at all to the cauſe depending between us and them. But, I ſuppoſe, he fanſied he ſhould make ſome advantage of the conceſſions he preſumed we ſhould make, for the eaſier gaining the perſon, for whoſe ſake theſe queſtions were propoſed.

Taking it for granted that we would readily allow, that a papiſt may be ſaved in his religion; and withal, telling the perſon, that the catholics do not allow ſo much to a proteſtant, dying in the proteſtant religion: He thought, by this artifice, to perſuade him or her, that therefore their church or religion muſt undoubtedly be ſafer than ours.

But if this was his deſign, he ſhews that he had a very mean opinion of the underſtanding of the perſon he dealt with; for, can any one, of ordinary ſenſe, be perſuaded, that popery is ever the better for our charitable opinion of ſome papiſts? Or that proteſtancy is ever the worſe, for their uncharitably damning all thoſe that are not of the popiſh communion.

If the cauſe that is in diſpute, was at all affected by what is thus pronounced by either party upon each other; for my part, I ſhould think that the advantage would be much on the ſide of the proteſtants: For ſure, any reaſonable man (if he had his church to chuſe, and, ſuppoſing that all other points in difference were laid aſide) ſhould rather join with that ſociety of chriſtians, which allow'd that chriſtians of other communions might be ſaved as well as they; than with that ſociety that confined ſalvation only to their own party, and damn'd all the reſt of the chriſtian world.

Sure I am, when all things are conſidered, it will appear, that charity is infinitely more a certain note of a true church, tho' without the pretence of infallibility;

bility; than a pretence to infallibility, without catholic charity: And yet those that make notes of the true church in the Roman communion, never fail to put in one, but usually leave out the other.

QUESTION II.

Was not the society of christians, united in faith and communion with the bishop of Rome, once the true catholic church?

ANSWER.

If by the society of christians, united in faith and worship with the bishop of Rome, be meant only those christians that were under his jurisdiction, and that owned him for their bishop, or for their head; then we say, that society of christians, thus united with the bishop of Rome, was never the true catholic church, but only one part of it.

If by the society of christians here spoken of, he meant all those churches all the world over; that, as they had the same faith, so were once united in one communion with the bishop of Rome (as, for any thing I know, before the great divisions of Christendom, there might be such a time) I say, if this be the meaning of the question, then I answer, That all these churches taken together, thus united in faith and worship, were the true catholic church. But then, we say, that none of these churches was more the catholic church than the rest; but they were all equally parts of the catholic church, and they were no more united with the bishop of Rome, than the bishop of Rome was with their bishops. My meaning is, while things thus happily stood, they were all united together under their several bishops, in the common bonds of faith, and charity, and communion, as all christian churches ought to be, and as it is much to be

desired

desired they were. But the bishop of Rome had no more authority over them, than they had over him; they were all sister-churches, but own'd no head, no universal bishop over them, but Christ Jesus; and, in case of a rupture (as, God knows, a great one did happen, and still continues, and which, not without cause, we lay chiefly at the doors of the church of Rome, upon account of their groundless usurpations in matters of government, and innovations in matters of faith;) I say, in case of a rupture, the church of Rome was as much obliged to re-unite itself with those other churches, supposing the rupture or schism was occasion'd by her, as any of those other churches were obliged to re-unite themselves with the church of Rome, supposing the schism or the breach began thro' their fault.

QUESTION III.

In what century did she commit the first error, and what visible communion did then oppose her?

ANSWER.

1. If it doth appear *de facto*, that the church of Rome hath erred, and doth yet continue so to do, it is not at all material, whether we can assign the precise time or no, when she did commit the first error (as the gentleman phraseth it) or who first opposed her in her errors.

Errors are not the less errors for having an undiscernable beginning, and not being suddenly taken notice of; no more than the tares in the field of corn that our Saviour speaks of, were the less tares for being sown in the night, by no-body knows who, while the husband-men slept.

But, I pray, let these gentlemen, who call upon us to shew the century when the errors of their church begun,

begun, and who, at that time, oppoſed them; or elſe they muſt conclude, that the church of Rome hath not erred at all; I ſay, let them try this argument of theirs upon a man that is troubled with the yellow jaundice, and perſuade ſuch a man, if they can, or any one that ſees him, that, if he cannot aſſign the preciſe day of the week when his diſtemper firſt began, and ſhew that ſomebody at that time gave him notice of it, and bid him have a care of himſelf; I ſay, that if he cannot ſhew this, he may certainly conclude, he hath not the yellow jaundice, but is a perfect ſound man; notwithſtanding that his great weakneſs and decay of ſpirits, and the yellowneſs of his eyes and face, do ſufficiently diſcover to himſelf, and all that ſee him, what a condition he is in.

2. But Secondly, Tho' it be not needful, for the ſhewing that the church of Rome hath erred, to give an account of the beginnings, and other circumſtances of her errors; yet we are not ſo much in the dark about theſe matters, but that we are able to give competent ſatisfaction to any indifferent enquirer, both as to the riſe, and as to the progreſs of moſt of the popiſh errors; by what degree they crept into the church; and who were the great promoters of them; and who were againſt them. And this hath been ſeveral times done by proteſtant writers, in their diſcourſes, as there hath been occaſion.

QUESTION IV.

Was there always a true church upon earth?

ANSWER.

We do believe there always was, and always will be a true church upon earth; but we do believe that it never was confined to the church of Rome: And we believe likewiſe that, tho' the church of Rome

was not in being, nor never had been, there would be ſtill, and would always have been, a true church of Chriſt upon earth.

QUESTION V.

By what legal authority was the church of Rome condemned to be heretical?

ANSWER.

I ſuppoſe this queſtion is tacked to the former, to make a ſort of argument, that the church of Rome is the only true church; for the propoſer thought that, if we did allow that there always was a true church upon earth, we muſt, of neceſſity, grant, that the church of Rome muſt be that church, unleſs we can prove that ſhe hath been condemned to be heretical by ſome legal authority; that is (I ſuppoſe he means) by ſome general council: But this ſophiſtry is too apparent, not to be eaſily ſeen through.

For, firſt, had the church of Rome continued never ſo orthodox, from the foundation of it to this day; yet we ſhould never have own'd that ſhe was the true church, in their ſenſe; that is, the one holy catholic church which we profeſs to believe in the creed. For ſtill, we ſhould only have owned her as a part of the catholic church, and we ſhould have believed other churches to have been as truly parts of it as ſhe; only with this difference, that if it appeared that ſhe had preſerved the faith and worſhip of Chriſt more pure among her members, than other churches had done among theirs, we ſhould have owned her as a founder church, and her communion to be ſafer than that of the reſt. But then, we muſt give the ſame preference to any other church againſt her, when it doth appear (as we think it doth) that they do better conform

conform to Chriſt's rule in faith and worſhip than ſhe doth.

But ſecondly, Why may we not be able to ſatisfy ourſelves, that the church of Rome is not the true church, unleſs we can ſhew by what legal authority ſhe was condemned to be heretical? Can nothing forfeit a title to the being the true church but only hereſy? Suppoſing the church of Rome was not guilty of hereſy, but only of ſchiſm (as, of all the churches in the world, we think we have reaſon to charge her with that crime in an eſpecial manner:) Is not that ſufficient to ſatisfy us that ſhe is not the only true church?

Thirdly, Admitting the church of Rome muſt be the true church, unleſs ſhe be heretical (which yet we can never believe) but admitting this, what reaſon is there that we ſhould be put to prove, that ſhe has been condemned to be heretical by ſome legal authority? May not the church of Rome be guilty of hereſy, tho' ſhe was never condemned to be heretical? By the ſame reaſon that you will deny this, I will deny any man to be a felon (tho' I be never ſo ſure he broke up my houſe and ſtole my goods) till I ſee him condemned to be hanged. That which makes a man or a church heretical, is the maintaining openly ſuch doctrines as are contrary to the faith of Chriſt; but the ſentence of authority againſt ſuch a man, or ſuch a church, doth only declare them heretical, but doth not make them ſo. So that the church of Rome, if ſhe maintains ſuch doctrines, may be guilty of hereſy, tho' ſhe was never condemned to be heretical.

And further, I ſhould be glad to know by what legal authority the proteſtant church of England is condemned to be heretical: And yet the Roman-catho-

lics

lics make no ſcruple to beſtow the name of heretics very liberally upon us. But let them not name the council of Trent, leſt they hear more about it than they deſire.

But it may be the author's deſign in propoſing this queſtion was only this: He would have us ſhew by what legal authority the church of Rome was condemned to be heretical, otherwiſe he thought we could not juſtify our ſeparation from that church.

Indeed, as things have ſtood ſince the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome have begun to prevail in theſe weſtern parts, and as they do yet ſtand, it is impoſſible, had the church of Rome been never ſo heretical, to have her condemned as ſuch by any general council truly ſo called; becauſe the affairs of Chriſtendom have of a long time been, and are now in ſuch a poſture, that ſuch a council cannot be convened as is truly free and general. All the eaſtern and the ſouthern churches, which made four of the five patriarchates, are, by their deplorable circumſtances, cut off from all poſſibility of giving their votes in ſuch a general aſſembly. And as for the churches in theſe weſtern parts of the world, if the pope be to call a council of them (as we can expect at preſent no other than ſuch) we know what we have to truſt to, by an experiment that was made of this kind in the laſt (pretended to be general) council of Trent: Which indeed was ſo far from being general, that it was not a full weſtern council, the major part of them there aſſembled being wholly the pope's creatures, and carrying all his points to his mind, notwithſtanding the remonſtrances of ſeveral ſovereign princes to the contrary. But tho' we cannot ſay that the Roman church hath been condemned by any general council

council as heretical, for her innovations, yet we can ſay, that ſhe doth now hold ſome doctrines contrary to the definitions of former general councils acknowledged to be ſo; we can ſay, and prove, that ſhe teacheth doctrines contrary to the ſenſe of the primitive fathers, and of ſome of her own popes; and we do ſay and believe, that if popery, as it is now eſtabliſhed by the council of Trent, had been brought into debate at any of the firſt four general councils, it would have been condemned as much as we now condemn it.

QUESTION VI.

Had the firſt proteſtant reformers the infallible aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt in the reforming the church?

ANSWER.

There was no need of any perſonal infallibility to be beſtowed upon the firſt reformers, for they pretended not to preach a new goſpel to the world, or to found new churches as the apoſtles did; all that they pretended to was, to preach the ſame goſpel that Chriſt and his apoſtles delivered to the world, and which, by an infallible ſpirit, was committed to writing for the benefit of after-ages, and to reſcue that goſpel from thoſe corruptions and errors which time and ignorance had mingled with it: This, I ſay, was their work. And if they were aſſured themſelves, and gave ſufficient evidence to thoſe they preached to, from the holy ſcriptures, and the writings of the primitive fathers, that they did this, they needed no private infallibility for the carrying on that deſign. A wiſe man will certainly give more credit to a perſon in what he offers about religion, who proves the doctrine by ſcripture and antiquity, than to any men or church that pretends to infallibility, and yet are deſtitute

ſtitute of theſe two ſupporters, as to what they propoſe to our belief.

QUESTION VII.

Had the church of England that aſſiſtance? If they had, to ſhew it: If not; How do they know they are rightly informed?

ANSWER.

I have in part told you; but I will tell you further what aſſiſtance the fathers of the church of England had in her reformation: They had the ſcriptures on their ſide: They had the primitive fathers and the councils on their ſide: They had the higheſt authority both eccleſiaſtical and civil on their ſide: And they had the bleſſing of God to go along with their endeavours. This aſſiſtance the church of England had in her reformation, and no other did ſhe ever pretend to; and by thoſe very means and no other, doth ſhe pretend to know that ſhe is rightly informed. She knows ſhe cannot be an heretical church, becauſe ſhe owns all thoſe ſummaries of faith, which chriſtians all the world over were baptized into. Or, if that be not enough, ſhe owns all the holy ſcriptures, which ſhe makes the rule of her faith; and laſtly, ſhe owns the four firſt general councils, which one of the popes did declare he received, and embraced, as he did the four goſpels; and in the laſt of which councils it is decreed, that nothing ſhould ever be added to that creed, or that faith, that was publiſhed at the council of Nice.

She knows ſhe is not a ſchiſmatical church, becauſe ſhe is willing and deſirous to hold communion with all the churches in the world, upon catholic terms, ſuch terms as the antient churches obſerved among themſelves. And if ſome churches now will

not

not admit her to their communion, but will impose terms which the antient churches never knew, she is sorry for this, but cannot help it, the fault lies at their doors, not at hers. And as to the points in dispute between her and the church of Rome, she hath never declined any fair trial which of the churches hath right and truth on their side; let but the church of Rome wave her groundless unaccountable infallibility, which they have neither scripture, nor any general council to give countenance to, and put the trial of the controversy between them upon holy scripture, as it is interpreted by the primitive fathers, and she will at any time join issue with her. This now being the concession of the church of England, who can doubt of the sincerity of her reformation, or what should hinder to make her abundantly certain that she is a true church, tho' she does not pretend to be infallible?

QUESTION VIII.

What way the church of England hath to determine controversies betwixt her and the dissenters besides the penal laws?

ANSWER.

The same way we have to determine controversies betwixt us and the papists, if the penal laws against them were taken away; of which I have already given an account.

QUESTION IX.

Give me a demonstration that the church of England is the church; such a one, as no other heretic can make use of for his sect.

ANSWER.

For God's sake, Sir, have a care how you talk of giving demonstrations, for I am sure your cause will

not bear it. Do but you give me a demonſtration that St. Peter was by Chriſt's appointment made head of the apoſtles, or that the biſhop of Rome doth ſucceed St. Peter in that headſhip, and I will turn Roman-catholic immediately. Nay, which is leſs, do but give me a demonſtration that he is a lawful canonical pope who now poſſeſſes St. Peter's chair, or that there has been ſuch a pope for many years; or that any man whom you ſhall name is a true biſhop, according to your own laws and canons; or that any prieſt you ſhall pitch upon is a true prieſt; or that you have in any church of your communion, the true ſacraments adminiſtred among you, and I do promiſe again, upon that condition, to be of your communion. But you know as well as I, that I promiſe nothing in ſaying this; for, according to the nature of the thing, and proceedings upon the laws of your church, it is impoſſible that any of theſe things ſhould be demonſtrated. And why therefore will you put me to give a demonſtration that the church of England is *the church*; and ſuch a demonſtration too, as no other heretic can make uſe of for his ſect? But ſomething I will ſay in anſwer to your demand.

And firſt of all, you do not put it rightly. You would have me give you a demonſtration, that the church of England is the true church. Why, Sir, the church of England never pretended to be the church in oppoſition to all other churches; tho' that was the pretence of the Donatiſts of old, and that is the pretence of your church now, and therefore you are apt to think that other churches do the ſame. All that we pretend to is, that we are a ſound church, a true part of the catholic church; and that our communion

is

is much safer than yours: And this we will join issue with you upon at any time.

Well, but you will say, instead of a demonstration, give me a proof that the church of England is a true church; and withal, such a proof, as no other heretic can make use of for his sect. This is, indeed, the meaning of your question; I will charitably suppose it is your meaning, because it is the best meaning: And I thus answer to it. As for proof that the church of England is a true, sound part of the catholic church, I have, in good part, given it already: And I repeat it again, and add this, That the church of England retains the catholic faith, according to all the ancient creeds; she can be convicted of no error condemned by the ancient churches; she owns all the ancient canon of scripture; she hath the same sacraments, and the same priesthood that the ancient church had; and if you can deny such a church as this to be a sound part of the catholic, I pray try your skill in making out your denial.

This is the answer to the former part of your question. But then, you desire further such a proof of the church of England being a true sound church, as no other heretics can make use of for their sect. Why, to this I also answer, That if any of those whom you call heretics, can really and truly say the same things for their church that we do say for ours, we shall never think them heretics, whatever you may account them; but shall always esteem them true members of the catholic church: But then, we always make a difference between those who only pretend to scripture and primitive records for their doctrines, and those who are able to make those pretences good. I grant, that several sects do plead both those things as well as we; but

but their plea is to be examined, before it be allowed. If their way be agreeable to the faith once deliver'd to the saints, it is to be approved; if not, it is to be reproved. And what we say as to them, we say as to you; for you have no other proof in the world, that you are so much as a true part of the church of Christ, but that you hold the same faith, and use the same worship, that was taught by Christ and his apostles: And so far as you retain that faith and worship, we allow you so far to be a true church; but wherein soever you depart from it, so far it is the duty of every church to depart from you. As for the privilege of infallibility, which you only, of all other christians in the world, do assume to yourselves, and from hence draw an argument to unwary people, that, because no body pretends to it but yourselves, therefore it must certainly be lodged in your church; it is so wholly devoid of all proof, nay, of all colour of proof, either from scripture, or councils, or ancient fathers; and, in truth, looks so like the bills that are pasted by empirics, upon every wall, for the curing all diseases, and resolving all questions, that it seems not worth the while to spend time in exposing it.

QUESTION X.

Shew me, ever before the reign of king Henry the eighth, any communion or society, that held all, and no other tenets, than the church of England doth hold?

ANSWER.

Commend me to this for a special demand—But as I have been so long upon the other questions, that I am quite tired, I shall make bold to give this, and the other that follow, a very quick dispatch.

The anſwer I give to this is, by making another demand, which is every whit as good and as proper as this. Shew me, before the time of the council of Trent, any communion or ſociety, nay, (which is more than is put in the demand) ſhew me but any one man, who held all, and no other tenets than the church of Rome ſince that council, doth hold; I ſay, ſhew me but this, and I promiſe I will recant. And this, I think, is a little more than is put in the demand: but it is an eaſy thing to aſk queſtions, or make demands.

QUESTION XI.

May not a popiſh king be the ſupream head of the church of England, in ſpiritual matters?

ANSWER.

What is deſigned by this queſtion, I know not; but I freely give a fair anſwer to it. Every ſovereign prince, whether popiſh or proteſtant, is, by the law of nature, and the law of God, in his own dominions, ſupream head of the church, in that ſenſe of headſhip which the church of England aſcribes to the king, namely, that, under Chriſt, he is ſupream governor of all perſons, and in all cauſes, as well eccleſiaſtical as civil.

QUESTION XII.

What certain rule hath the church of England for the true interpretation of the ſcripture?

ANSWER.

I expected this queſtion long before, for I hardly ever ſaw any popiſh queries, but this was one of them. And,

And, in anſwer to it, I tell the propoſer what he may meet with over and over again, both in the writings of the fathers, and in the proteſtant writers; and that is, that our rule of interpreting is the ſame rule that all the world hath (except thoſe who are poſſeſſed with infallibility) *viz.* to conſider the texts of ſcripture very well, and how they relate to what goes before, and what follows after, and to compare one text of ſcripture with another, eſpecially the obſcure texts with the plainer; and to examine likewiſe what was the ſenſe of the beſt antient chriſtians about any text we conſult: (For, whatever the propoſer thinks, we pay as great a deference to the antient writers of the church, as any of them do, and, perhaps, a great deal more.)

This is the rule by which the church of England interprets the ſcripture; and I deſire any of the church of Rome to ſhew a better. If they will ſay that our rule is not a certain rule; I anſwer, it is as certain as the thing will bear, and is certain enough for all the purpoſes either of chriſtian life, or of neceſſary chriſtian truths. For, as for thoſe truths of ſcripture which are not neceſſary, we may be ſecurely ignorant of them: So that we have certainly all the means of being rightly informed that they have, about the ſenſe of ſcripture, except one thing, and that is, the pretended infallibility of their church; and yet this one thing, among all conſidering men, muſt go for nothing. For this I dare be bold to ſay, that the church of Rome hath never yet, by virtue of her infallibility, made any one ſingle text of ſcripture clearer or plainer than it was before infallibility was pretended to. This I inſiſt upon, and would be glad to have one inſtance to confute what I ſay; for I love infallibility, if I could tell

where to find it. I grant, the learned men of the church of Rome have done considerable service towards the explaining of the bible: but that service they have done, is not owing to the infallibility of their church, but to their own honest pains, industry, and study.

Thus I have gone over the gentleman's twelve queries: I beg his pardon that I have dwelt so long upon them. He has put me to some trouble which I did not expect; I hope my turn comes next to propose some questions to him. If he desires it, I will get them ready for him; and if he will answer as clearly and plainly, as I have done, I shall desire to be better acquainted with him.

An answer to some popish paper, put into the hands of one of his parishioners. Sent as an antidote to the gentleman who had received it.

I CANNOT but say, that whoever wrote this paper, looked upon the person he gave it to as a very shallow man, and easy to be imposed upon; otherwise he would have been ashamed, for his own credit-sake, to have let such sophistries pass under his hand, as are here offered. For this is the bottom of his argument:

Because the church of Rome, in former times, was one *of those churches that had a lawful succession from the apostles; therefore that church, if it have not since erred, is still* the *true church.*

The trick that he would here put upon the reader, lies in these last words, *is still the true church.* If he had said, *a true church*, he knows we would readily have agreed to his proposition. But that was not at all to his purpose, because it would not serve his cause; for there have always been, and yet are, several true churches in the world, besides the Roman. But now drawing his conclusion thus, that the church of Rome is the true church, he would have it believed, that she is the true church, in opposition to all other churches and communions. In a word, that the Roman is the one catholic-church of Christ, out of which salvation cannot be had. This, I say, must be his meaning, if he would make any proselytes by this argument.

But now taking this to be his meaning, what a palpable ſhame is here put upon his reader. The church of Rome had a lawful ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, therefore it is ſtill the only true catholic church. Whereas, for all its ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, it could be no more than a part of the catholic church, which was all that the other apoſtolical churches, as Jeruſalem, and Antioch, &c. pretended to claim from that ſucceſſion: not to be each of them the only true catholic church. So that when he ſays the church of Rome is ſtill the true church, he puts upon us in his concluſion, things that were not in his premiſes. Could he prove to us, that the church of Rome was ever the true church, in the ſenſe he intends it, *viz.* The one univerſal church of Chriſt, out of which is no ſalvation, we might allow ſhe is ſtill ſo. But this, we know, he can never prove; and we believe he is ſo wiſe, as not to offer at it.

What I have now ſaid, is a full anſwer to all the argument that is in the paper, tho' we ſhould meddle no further with it. For, whether we can, or cannot anſwer what follows, I am ſure his reaſon, by which he would perſuade you to become a convert to their church, is ſhewed to be no reaſon, becauſe it proceeds upon this falſe ſuppoſition, that the church of Rome was once the catholic church, which it never was: But now being, as he thinks, ſecure of that; and ſuppoſing that you will readily grant, that if the church of Rome hath never erred, it is ſtill the catholic church, he proceeds to ſhew that the church of Rome hath never erred. And he uſeth an admirable argument for it. No church, ſays he, can err but in three points, *viz.* ſchiſm, hereſy, or apoſtacy. Which, methinks, is juſt ſuch a propoſition as this: No man can be ſick, un-

unleſs he contract his diſeaſe by ſurfeiting, by catching cold, or by ſome contagion. For can any man, in good earneſt, believe, that no church can err, unleſs at the ſame time ſhe be guilty either of hereſy, or ſchiſm, or apoſtacy? Pray what ſhall we think of the churches of Aſia in pope Victor's time, who differed from the weſtern churches about the celebration of eaſter? And where the difference ran ſo high, that the pope proceeded to excommunicate them upon that account? What ſhall we think of the African churches in St. Cyprian's time, who were for re-baptizing of heretics againſt the ſenſe of the Roman church? Will this gentleman ſay, that they were guilty either of hereſy, or ſchiſm, or apoſtacy? I doubt not, but he will ſay they erred; but I believe he would be loth to charge them with any of theſe three crimes; becauſe, if he doth, he will make ſome of the beſt men in thoſe ages, and who are now owned as ſaints by the church of Rome, to be either heretics, or ſchiſmatics, or apoſtates.

But ſuppoſe we ſhould tell him, that the church of Rome hath erred ſome of thoſe three ways which he aſſigns to be the only inſtances in which a church can err; I am ſure he will ſooner tax us for our liberty of cenſuring, than be able to anſwer our arguments. Suppoſe we ſay, that the church of Rome is guilty of ſchiſm, and that notoriouſly, I do not know what he will anſwer to it; for ſchiſm is nothing elſe but a breach of catholic-communion, and where there is any ſuch breach, the ſchiſm lies at their doors who are the cauſes of it. This is acknowledged by all who know any thing of divinity. But now, in this ſad divided ſtate of Chriſtendom, where there are ſo many ſchiſms and ſeparations, who are ſo much to be

blamed as the church of Rome? who being only upon the same level with other churches, and sister to them, has by an unheard-of usurpation made herself mother and mistress of all other churches, and excluded all christians who will not own her as such out of her communion. If this be not schism; if this be not a breach of catholic-communion, I know not what is.

As for the second point, wherein he says a church is capable of erring, *viz.* Heresy; tho' they do liberally upon all occasions impute that crime to us, and scruple not to call us damnable heretics, yet if it should come to a fair trial, we shall be able to make it appear, that they much rather deserve that name, even according to the definition of heresy that is given by themselves. If heresy be an error in faith obstinately maintained, as I think that is the common definition that passeth among them, I do not doubt but we can shew a great many such errors so maintained in their church. If they add to this definition such errors as are maintained against the sense of the church, why, upon these terms we will join issue with them, and are ready to prove, that the present church of Rome doth maintain errors against the sense of the scriptures, and the primitive apostolic churches, which in all reason ought to be the measure and standard by which the truth of the doctrines is to be tried. And lastly, if it be heresy to innovate in the christian faith, and to make new articles of religion necessary to salvation, which Christ and his apostles never thought of, (as for my part I think this as truly heresy, as any other thing whatsoever) in this respect we do not doubt to say, that the church of Rome is the most heretical church in the world; because, whereas all other christian churches that we know of, are contented with the antient

tient creeds, ſhe hath added to the creed as many more articles, and made the belief of thoſe new ones which ſhe had added, as neceſſary to ſalvation, as the belief of the antient ones.

And then as to the third inſtance he gives of the church's error, *viz.* by the way of apoſtacy, this we are unwilling to charge the church of Rome with, for we could not call her by the name of a church, if we believed ſhe was guilty of it. Apoſtacy, (as that word is commonly uſed) is a departure from the chriſtian faith. But we own the church of Rome doth ſtill hold the foundation of faith, tho' upon that foundation ſhe has built many errors. But if by apoſtacy, be meant a departure from any of Chriſt's doctrines, that are not abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; in this ſenſe we do not doubt but the preſent church of Rome hath apoſtatized: that is to ſay, ſhe doth in ſeveral inſtances teach quite otherwiſe than Chriſt and his apoſtles taught.

The gentleman having told you, that the church cannot err but in theſe three points, puts theſe queſtions to you, 'When, where, and how the church 'erred? Who found out the error? What aſſembly, 'and by whoſe power gathered together?' Tho' he puts all theſe queſtions concerning the church in general, yet we ſuppoſe he hereby means all along the church of Rome, otherwiſe he ſpeaks nothing to the purpoſe.

Now it is a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that if we can prove that the church of Rome hath actually erred, it is not a farthing matter whether we give an anſwer to theſe queſtions or no; becauſe they are altogether impertinent. They are juſt as much to the purpoſe as, if a man who is really out of order in point of health, or lies languiſhing under a diſtemper, ſhould endea-

vour to perſuade his friends, or thoſe that ſtand by him, that he is in perfect health, and ails nothing, by this argument; 'If I be ſick, it concerns you to 'ſhew me when, and where, and how I got this ſick-'neſs: who firſt found it out: what conſultations 'of phyſicians diſcovered it; and if it was a conſult 'of phyſicians, pray by whoſe order were they ſent 'for?' Would not this be a ridiculous argument to the by-ſtanders? And yet juſt ſuch is this argument, by which this gentleman would perſuade you that his church was never diſeaſed with any error.

It is ſufficient to ſatisfy any indifferent perſon, that the church of Rome has been guilty of great errors, when it is viſible and apparent that ſhe has departed from the holy ſcriptures, both in doctrine and practice, in abundance of inſtances, tho' it cannot be ſhewed you when, and where, and how that church took up theſe errors, or who firſt found them out; tho' even as to theſe things we are not ſo at a loſs but that we could give a particular anſwer, if it was fit to enter upon the particulars. We can tell you the particular things wherein the church of Rome hath departed from the doctrine of Chriſt and his apoſtles: And we give you theſe for inſtance, half-communion, honour given to images, adoration of the hoſt, invocation of ſaints, and ſervice in an unknown tongue. Theſe are all matters of practice, contrary to the tenor of the ſcriptures. And as for doctrines, we can name ſeveral inſtances which they have made neceſſary articles of faith, which have no countenance from ſcripture, but are much againſt it; as the doctrines about penance, and tranſubſtantiation, and purgatory, and indulgences, and the pope's ſupremacy.

We can tell you likewiſe when theſe doctrines began to prevail in the church of Rome, not that they all ſprung up at once, but by degrees, and in ſeveral ages. But thoſe ages we can name: and we can likewiſe tell who chiefly promoted them, and for what end; and who oppoſed them.

Laſtly, we can likewiſe give you a reaſonable account of our own reformation here in England, and ſatisfy every indifferent perſon that it is made by juſt and ſufficient authority, foraſmuch as every national church hath power and authority in itſelf to reform itſelf, according to the laws of God, and the principles and practice of the primitive church, without conſulting the pope, or any commiſſioned by him. And this reformation of ours was duly and regularly carried on, having the concurrence both of the princes and of all the eſtates of the realm, *viz.* clergy, nobility, and laity, which is abundantly ſufficient to juſtify our proceedings. Tho' yet, had there been none of theſe things, ſo great and dangerous were the corruptions of the church of Rome, that even any private man who was convinced of them, was in duty bound to abſtain from the communion of that church, ſo long as ſhe impoſed thoſe things, as neceſſary terms of her communion.

Advice to proteſtants of ordinary capacities, how to behave themſelves when they are tampered with to change their religion.

THE firſt thing they will uſually tell you is, that it concerns you infinitely to look that you be of the true church, for you are damned if you be not, becauſe there is but one faith, one baptiſm, one church.

To this you muſt anſwer, that you do believe and profeſs that one faith which was delivered by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and that you are baptized into that faith, and conſequently you are a member of Chriſt's holy catholic-church.

They will tell you, that you are not a member of Chriſt's catholic-church, becauſe you are not a Roman-catholic.

To this you muſt anſwer, that you are a member of the catholic-church, tho' you be not a member of the Roman church; for the Roman-church is but a part of the catholic-church.

They will tell you, that the Roman-church hath all the marks of the catholic-church, and no other church but that hath.

You may tell them again, that no one particular church can have all the marks of the catholic; no more than a particular county of England, as for inſtance, Middleſex, can have the marks of being all England: For the catholic-church doth take into its notion all the churches of Chriſt throughout the world; but

but the Roman-church, with all thoſe particular churches that join in communion with it, makes but a ſmall part of thoſe churches. So that all that can be gathered from her marks is, that ſhe is one part of the church of Chriſt; but ſhe wants all thoſe marks that ſhould either ſhew her to be the whole church, or a ſound part of the church; for certainly, among the marks of a true and ſound church, this ought to be put in as one of the principal, that the church which profeſſeth ſo to be, ſhould, in matters of faith, hold a conformity with the holy ſcriptures and the primitive writings: But this the church of Rome doth not at this day.

They will tell you, that the church of Rome is, in all things, conformable to the holy ſcriptures, and to the primitive church.

You may ſafely anſwer them, that, in a great many things, the church of Rome hath defined, and practiſeth at this day contrary to the ſcriptures, or the uſage of the primitive church: As for inſtance, in denying the cup of the holy communion to the laity; in celebrating the communion every day, when none of the company but the prieſt doth receive; in having their prayers in an unknown tongue; in a religious uſe of images in the worſhip of God; in ſeveral doctrines which they have made matters of faith; as the doctrine of indulgences, purgatory, ſeven ſacraments, tranſubſtantiation, invocation of ſaints, and the like. As to all theſe things, you may ſafely challenge them, that there is nothing to be ſhewn in the holy ſcriptures, or in primitive antiquity, for the belief or practice of them, but much to be ſhewn againſt them.

They will aſk you, who is to be judge of the meaning of ſcripture? Is every private man to be judge of that?

that? At that rate, we ſhall have as many faiths as there are men.

To this you may anſwer, you refuſe no judges of the ſenſe of ſcripture, ſuppoſing they be equally indifferent ones; but you think it a little unreaſonable that the church of Rome ſhould be a judge of the ſenſe of ſcripture in matters wherein ſhe is a party; that you are willing to be concluded by the judgment of the univerſal church, as to the ſenſe of any texts of ſcripture that are in debate between the church of England and the Roman; and you will, at any time, join iſſue with them upon that point, provided you may have liberty to call in one to your aſſiſtance, who is uſed to thoſe matters. But you may anſwer further: Every man is a judge of the ſenſe of ſcripture, ſuppoſing it be rightly tranſlated, in needful matters; and as to thoſe ſcriptures that are not neceſſary, it is no great matter if you do not underſtand them.

If they ſay, that in neceſſary matters the ſcriptures are not ſufficiently plain.

Then pray aſk them, how it comes about that God ſhould not be able, by the pen-men he made uſe of, to put his mind plainly into writing, as well as Tully, Ariſtotle, or Virgil, put their minds into writing? We can, at this day, underſtand the ſenſe of thoſe authors as to moſt of the things they write about; tho', about ſome paſſages, there is a controverſy. And why may we not as well underſtand the ſenſe of thoſe writings that were dictated by God almighty?

When they preſs you to take the ſcriptures only in their interpretation, you muſt aſk them, why they would have you believe their interpretation? I ſuppoſe they will anſwer, becauſe their interpretation is the ſenſe of the church, which cannot err.

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If you ask them again, how they prove that the church cannot err? It is likely they will tell you, that Christ hath promised to be with the church to the end of the world; and if so, how is it possible the church should fall into errors about faith?

To this you may answer, that Christ hath indeed promised that he will be with the apostles; and you are likewise willing to grant, that this promise is to be extended to all those who succeed the apostles, to the end of the world. But what is this to infallibility? May not Christ's Spirit be present with christian ministers, unless, at the same time, you suppose he confers upon them the privilege of infallibility? But if this text do indeed make any thing towards infallibilty, it will rather prove the infallibility of particular ministers, than particular churches. But how, from this text, the church of Rome, above all others, should derive to herself a privilege of being infallible, is beyond all reason, and almost beyond all imagination.

They will ask you, where was your church before Luther? You may tell them your church was there to be found where their church never was, *viz.* in the holy scriptures, and the records of the ancient fathers and councils. If they cavil at this answer, you may answer directly to their question, in this manner: You may tell them, That the church of England, before Luther, was just in the same place where it is now; for the protestants did not pretend to make a new church, but only to reform the old one. The church of England, before that time, embraced a great many errors in matters of religion, and built a great deal of hay and stubble upon the foundation. But after that time, through the mercy of God, she was purged from those errors, and threw aside that rubbish, which,

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by time, and too much compliance with the Roman church, ſhe had contracted; but ſtill ſhe was the ſame church ſhe had been before, as much as a face that is waſh'd is the ſame that it was before, when it was dirty.

They will urge you to ſhew them any church, before the reformation, that held, in matters of faith, as the church of England now doth.

You may tell them, That all the ancient churches of Chriſt held the ſame faith the church of England now holds; and if in the articles, and other public monuments of our church, we have made declarations againſt ſeveral particulars, ſuch as the pope's ſupremacy, &c. of which we find no mention in the primitive church, it is becauſe there were none in thoſe days who held thoſe doctrines: But if they had been ſtarted, we do not in the leaſt doubt but they would have been as much condemned by the ancient churches, as they are by the church of England.

A SHORT ARGUMENT *againſt the doctrine of infallibility, as it is commonly pretended to be proved by the Roman-catholics.*

HOW will you prove to a proteſtant, that the church is infallible? If you ſay, that we have the church's tradition for it, you ſay no more than this, that the church hath always taught, and doth now teach, that ſhe is infallible. But then the queſtion returns: How ſhall we know that the church is not miſtaken in what ſhe ſo teacheth?

If you ſay, that the holy ſcripture (which, among all chriſtians, is acknowledg'd to be of divine authority) doth teach, That the church, in all ages, is, and muſt be infallible; we aſk again, How can we be certain that the ſcripture teacheth ſo, ſince we do not find that any text of ſcripture hath ſuch a meaning?

If in anſwer to this, you tell us, That the church, to whom only it belongs to interpret ſcripture, doth declare, that this is the ſenſe of ſcripture, you have ſaid no more than you did before; for all that you ſay is this, That therefore we are to believe that Chriſt, in ſcripture, hath promiſed infallibility to his church, becauſe the church ſaith he did: So that ſtill we muſt take the church's own word for her own infallibility.

If you go another way to work to untie this knot, and ſay that the ſcriptures are ſufficiently plain in themſelves to all unprejudiced perſons about this point

of infallibility, especially as they are backed with the constant tradition of the church in all ages; we will acknowledge your answer to be reasonable; but we will join issue with you upon this point, and will put the issue upon these two questions:

1. Where can you produce one text of scripture that doth either directly, or by consequence, necessarily infer, that the church of Christ, in all ages, shall be secure from error in all doctrines that she teacheth?

2. Among several texts of scripture which you urge for the proof of the church's infallibility, where can you name so much as one, that hath always had the tradition of the church to make that sense of it which is now given by your Roman patrons of infallibility?

Do but produce one text that maketh for you either of these ways, and you will do something towards your cause. But in the mean time while your are a doing this, give me leave to remind you, that in putting the issue of the controversy upon this point, we have gained a point or two from you, which when you come to talk to any purpose of your doctrine of infallibility, the protestants will take notice of, and you must own.

First of all, that all the certainty of that doctrine rests upon the authority of the scripture only.

2. That every man, before he can be rationally satisfied about the truth of that doctrine, must judge for himself about the sense of the scripture, tho' he is to take in all the helps for the interpreting of it (the chief of which is tradition) that he can come by.

And therefore, thirdly, he must be allowed to examine all texts and compare them one with another, making use still of the best assistances he can get for this

this purpoſe, becauſe otherwiſe he can make no true judgment.

And therefore, fourthly, if he cannot ſatisfy himſelf, he muſt be allowed to examine all the particular doctrines that are taught in the church where he lives, and to judge of their agreement or diſagreement with the ſcripture. For if any one doctrine taught by the church, be repugnant to the holy ſcripture, it is certain that the church which teacheth that doctrine cannot be infallible.

I do not ſay that it is neceſſary for every man, in order to his ſatisfaction, to run thro' all this method; but I ſay, even according to the moſt plauſible methods, that the church of Rome can defend herſelf by, ſhe muſt allow of this method: from which I make three inferences:

1. That the ſcriptures, when all is done, are the rule of our faith.

2. That every one ought to have liberty allowed him to examine the ſcriptures.

3. And that every one, before he can conclude that the church is infallible, ſhould be allowed to examine all the particular doctrines of that church, and not to run away with a general notion that ſuch a church is infallible, and therefore all ſhe teacheth is true.

END of the SEVENTH VOLUME.